Preface to Introduction to Sociology 5e

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About This Book

Welcome to *Introduction to Sociology 5e*, an OpenStax resource created with several goals in mind: accessibility, affordability, customization, and student engagement—all while encouraging learners toward high levels of learning. Instructors and students alike will find that this textbook offers a strong foundation in sociology.

In order to better fit the diverse student body of urban schools, such as The City University of New York (CUNY), this version is the one edited by Hirosuke Hyodo, Ph.D. The license type remains to be CC-BY 4.0, the most accommodating one.

To broaden access and encourage community curation, *Introduction to Sociology 5e* is “open source” licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license. Everyone is invited to submit examples, emerging research, and other feedback to enhance and strengthen the material and keep it current and relevant for today’s students. You can make suggestions by contacting Hiro Hyodo, hhyodo@bmcc.cuny.edu.

To the Student

This book is written for you and is based on the teaching and research experience of numerous sociologists. In today's global socially networked world, the topic of sociology is more relevant than ever before. We hope that through this book, you will learn how simple, everyday human actions and interactions can change the world. In this book, you will find applications of sociology concepts that are relevant, current, and balanced.

To the Instructor

This text is intended for a one-semester introductory course. Since current events influence our social perspectives and the field of sociology in general, OpenStax encourages instructors to keep this book fresh by sending in your up-to-date examples to hhyodo@bmcc.cuny.edu so that students and instructors around the country can relate and engage in fruitful discussions.

General Approach

Introduction to Sociology 5e adheres to the scope and sequence of a typical introductory sociology course. In addition to comprehensive coverage of core concepts, foundational scholars, and emerging theories we have incorporated section reviews with engaging questions, discussions that help students apply the sociological imagination, and features that draw learners into the discipline in meaningful ways. Although this text can be modified and reorganized to suit your needs, the standard version is organized so that topics are introduced conceptually, with relevant, everyday experiences.

Features of OpenStax Introduction to Sociology 3e

Modularity

This textbook is organized on Connexions (http://cnx.org) as a collection of modules that can be rearranged and modified to suit the needs of a particular professor or class. That being said, modules often contain references to content in other modules, as most topics in sociology cannot be discussed in isolation.

Section Summaries

Section summaries distill the information in each section for both students and instructors down to key, concise points addressed in the section.

Further Research

This feature helps students further explore the section topic and offers related research topics that could be explored.

Acknowledgements

Introduction to Sociology 5e is based on the work of numerous professors, writers, editors, and reviewers who are able to bring topics to students in the most engaging way.

We would like to thank all those listed below as well as many others who have contributed their time and energy to review and provide feedback on the manuscript. Especially Clint Lalonde and team at BC Campus for sharing the updates they made for use in this edition, and the team at Stark State College for their editorial support in this update. Their input has been critical in maintaining the pedagogical integrity and accuracy of the text.

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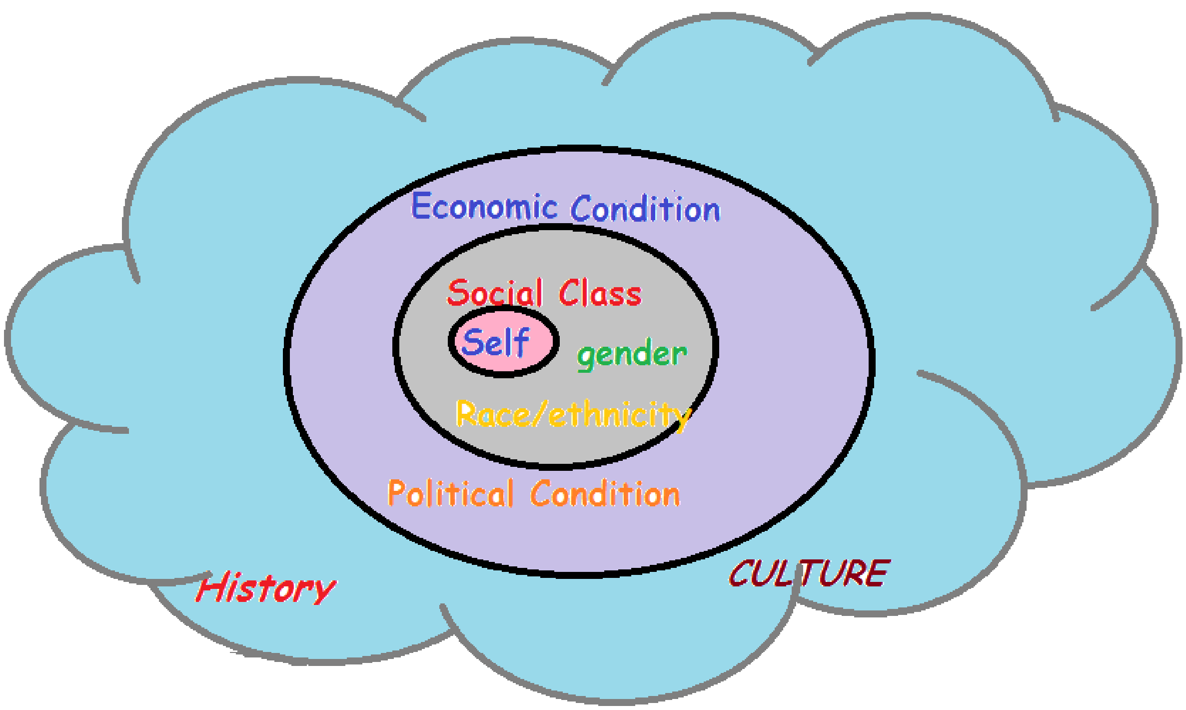
Supplements

Accompanying the main text is an Instructor's PowerPoint file, which includes all of the images and captions found throughout the text and an Instructor's test bank.

Disclaimer

Introduction to Sociology
class="introduction"

Sociologists study how society shapes what we do and how we think, through several important elements, as shown above.



Social Conditions and Social Locations

We all belong to societies, whose size can be as small as a family or as large as a country. Societies vary not just in size but, to be noted, in social conditions in several important ways. They are attached to the society as a whole on the macro level, including economic conditions, political conditions, historical (cultural) conditions, and so on. Such **social conditions** are assumed to shape people's behaviors (or what they do) and attitudes (how they think). For example, those who grew up in democratic environments tend to be more democratic than those who grew up in feudalistic environments. Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, indeed, many Americans supported even slavery. Does anyone of us support it today? No, none of us does; we were born and grew up in way more democratic political conditions.

Not just political conditions, but also think about economic conditions and historical (cultural) conditions, as well, in connection to people's behaviors and attitudes. In such a diverse society as the U.S., for example, people come from different cultures and, thus, act and think in different ways. American sociologist Herbert Gans, indeed, observes differences even between parents (foreign-born) and their own children (native-born). According to him, "Neither will [the native-born children] be willing--or even able--to take low-wage, long-hour “immigrant” jobs, as their parents did (Gans 1992, p. 173). The parents maintain their original cultural conditions while their children tend to be inclined more to the American cultural conditions. Although they share the same DNA, hence, they differ in their behaviors and attitudes.

In addition to social conditions, we all have our own social locations that are attached to each one of us. They include, but are not limited to, social class, race/ethnicity, gender, and, as just shown above, immigrant status. They are also assumed to shape our behaviors and attitudes. Smoking, for example, is a behavior determined by some social locations, such as social class. In the past, smoking was a normative behavior, not associated with social class (Washington Post 2015, Jan. 14). But once the health risks of smoking became widely-known, the better-off began kicking the habit way more successfully than lower-class people. Today, it's considered a class-related behavior. Just like social conditions, hence, **social locations** are also important sociological tools for analyzing people's behaviors and attitudes.

To sum up, it is the social environments (i.e., social conditions and locations) that shape our behaviors and attitudes, and sociologists dismiss any explanations about human behaviors/attitudes based on DNA, instincts, psychic power, or willpower.

"I think therefore I am"? Very good, but don't say that in your sociology class, okay? Why? That's because in this statement, there's no room for social conditions or locations to be taken into account.

What Is Sociology?

- Explain concepts central to sociology
- Understand how different sociological perspectives have developed

Sociology, Society, Culture, and Sociological Imagination

Photo Courtesy pxhere.com< https://pxhere.com/en/photo/329588 >.

Sociology is the scientific study of what people do (behaviors) and how they think (attitudes) referring to their *social conditions* and *social locations*. "Social conditions" vary, as aforementioned, in their types and directions, be they politically democratic or feudalistic, economically rich or poor, socially integrated or segregated, and so forth. "Social locations" include social class (i.e., a combined variable of education, occupation, and income), race/ethnicity, gender, and so forth. Sociologists assume, hence, that such social conditions and locations, or to say "the society," shape our behaviors and attitudes.

Society is an entity that shapes how its members interact with one another with consistently structured sets of rules, be they formal (legal laws) or informal (cultural norms).

Sociologists study all aspects and levels of interactions. The **micro-level** sociology studies social interactions between individuals taking place in

everyday situations, while the **macro-level** sociology looks at trends among, and between, large institutions, be they business, educational, or governmental. For example, micro-level sociologists observe how individuals manage their impressions towards one another in face-to-face encounters. In contrast, macro-level sociologists examine if there are relationships between, say, the nation's economic conditions and the crime rates, or between race/ethnicity and social class.

Culture is a historically developed, yet ever changing, set of rules, know-hows, and tools that support social life and survival both on the individual level and on the group level. Our cultural survival vehicles were built not from coalitions of genes but from coalitions of ideas roped together by cultural evolution (Pagel 2012, p. 46), or of accumulated knowledge through countless generations of our ancestors.

Sociologist C. Wright Mills suggests that in addition to information about, and reason for, what is going on in our society, we need to have "a quality of mind" or **sociological imagination** that enables us to grasp the relations between history (i.e., the process of changing social structures) and biography (a person's behaviors and attitudes) (2000 [1959], pp. 5-6; paraphrased). It can be seen as a discerning method of understanding people in connection to their social conditions and locations.

The Location of Sociology among Other Fields of Studies

Humanities	**Social Sciences**	**Natural Sciences**
Literature, Philosophy, Music, Art, Religion...	Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science...	Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Astronomy, Mathematics...

Subjective/Subjective	Subjective/Objective	Objective/Objective

The Location of "Sociology" among Other Fields of Studies

In order to locate *sociology* among other fields of studies, first, we can categorize all studies into two groups: *humanities* and *sciences*. The fields of **humanities** include literature, philosophy, music, art, religion, and so forth. They deal with subjective matters in subjective fashion, based on intuitions, inspirations, and/or opinions. Views offered in humanities may not be universally agreeable; they are subjective (opinions), not objective (facts). For example, an oil painting that may appear to be very beautiful to some may not be so to some others, and that's okay in humanities.

Second, sciences can be further categorized into two subgroups: *natural sciences* and *social sciences*. **Natural sciences** include physics, biology, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, and so forth. They study objective matters in objective fashion, based on empirically observed and/or measured facts. Unlike reactions to works in humanities (e.g., oil paintings, novels, and songs) that can vary more or less, which is okay, if scientific studies of a given natural phenomenon offer two or more different answers, that wouldn't be okay at all. For example, "1+1" has to be 2, invariably, which is a fact, not an opinion (is it?). Or the boiling point of water at 1 atmosphere has to be 100˚ C (or 212˚ F), always. Who boils the water doesn't matter at all; things react to the same situation in the same way, regardless.

People are not things; they react to the same situation in different ways, depending on their own subjective perceptions of the reality, which are shaped by their own particular social conditions and locations. **Social sciences** study subjective matters (what people do and how they think) in objective fashion, based on empirically observed and/or measured facts. The fields in social sciences include sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science, and so forth. Among these, the main focus of the first three is directly placed on "people."

The difference between sociology and psychology lies, roughly saying, in that the former tries to seek the cause of people's behaviors and attitudes in the external environment (i.e., their social conditions and locations), while the latter tries to find that in the inner environment (their psyche). The difference between sociology and anthropology lies in that although both refer to the

external environment (especially "culture"), the former studies social realities in modern societies growing after the Industrial Revolution (i.e., industrial and postindustrial societies) and the latter, those in premodern societies observed before the Industrial Revolution (hunting-gathering, horticultural-pastoral, and agricultural/feudalistic societies).

To restate what **sociology** is about, it is the scientific study of what people in industrial and postindustrial societies do (behaviors) and how they think (attitudes), referring to their social conditions and social locations, the scientific study that this textbook introduces through various topics.

Modern U.S. families may be very different in structure from what was

historically typical. (Photo courtesy of Tony Alter/Wikimedia Commons)

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Glossary

culture
: a group's shared practices, values, and beliefs

figuration
: the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of an individual and the society that shapes that behavior

reification
: an error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence

society
: a group of people who live in a defined geographical area who interact with one another and who share a common culture

sociological imagination
: the ability to understand how your own past relates to that of other people, as well as to history in general and societal structures in particular

sociology
: the systematic study of society and social interaction

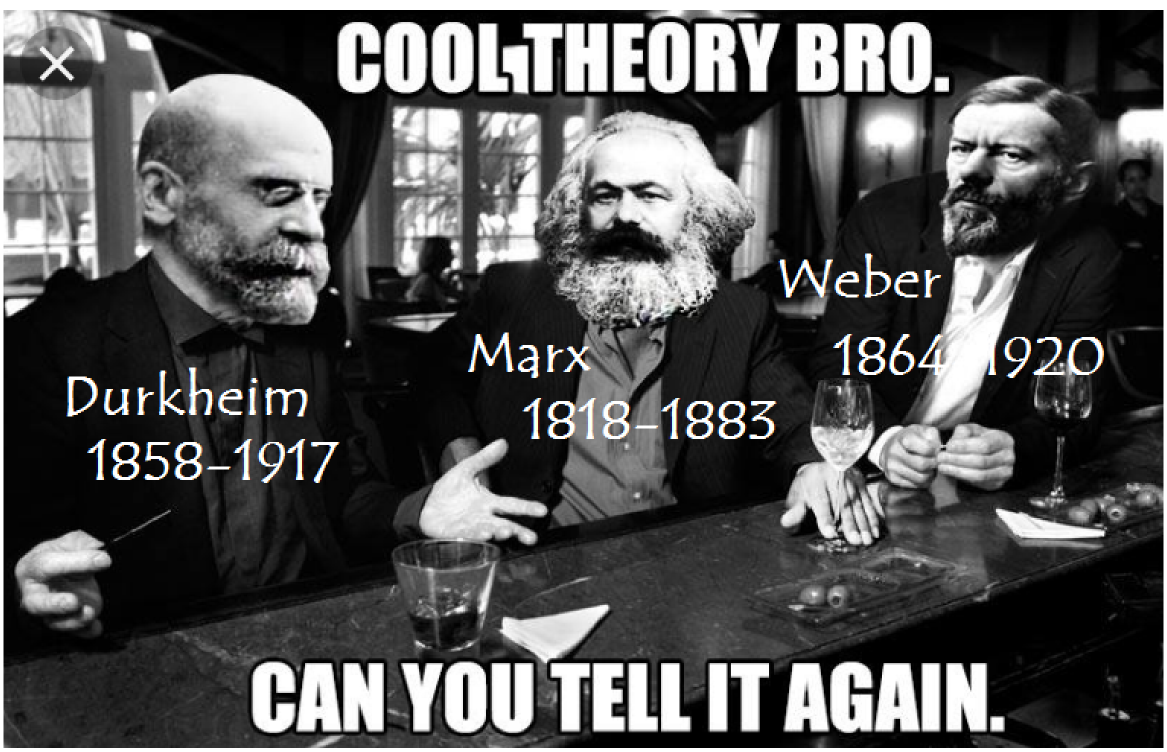
The History of Sociology

- Explain why sociology emerged when it did
- Describe how sociology became a separate academic discipline

The turn of the nineteenth century saw great changes as the effects of **the Industrial Revolution**, which had started half a century ago. It was a time of great social, economic, and political upheaval with the collapse of feudalism and the rise of capitalism. In the first half of the nineteenth century alone, about 5 million Europeans, who had lost their traditionally perpetuated social environments based mostly on farming, crossed the Atlantic Ocean in search for new jobs in the U.S. (Jones 1992). The field of study, new in that era, named "sociology" was *born* under such circumstances called "modernization."

Creating a Discipline

The Three Classical Theorists



From the left, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber.
(Photo courtesy of pinterest.com)

Karl Marx (1818–1883) is one of the most important contributors to the birth of sociology. He was bitterly critical about what was going on under the rise, and the growth, of capitalism. In 1848, he, together with Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), coauthored *The Communist Manifesto* (2006 [1848]), a very influential antithesis against capitalism--whose copy is kept in most libraries including, of course, the BMCC library.

According to Marx and Engels, capitalism--an economic system characterized by private ownership, free competition, and profit motive (will be discussed in Ch. 18)--led to irreconcilably great disparities in social, economic, and political power between the owners of the means of production (bourgeoisie) and the workers (proletariat). The vast majority of workers, previously peasants, who had left the land to work in cities, earned barely enough to eat. Things were so bad that the average worker died at age 30 (Edgerton 1992, p. 87). Such inequalities remain thickly still today; some CEOs of giant corporations enjoy private jets while many working class people, who work day and night, still face the difficulty in paying the rent of their small apartments.

Marx predicted that inequalities of capitalism would become so extreme that workers would eventually revolt. This would lead to the collapse of capitalism, which would be replaced by communism, a political and economic system characterized by public ownership, cooperation, and equal distribution of necessities (will be discussed in Ch. 18). Marx believed that communism was the ultimately equitable system for all humans.

Marx's predictions remained to be a kind of fantasy until recently. According to a U.S. weekly magazine *The Nation* (2019, Nov. 25), however, global rebellions against so-called *neoliberalism*--i.e., a globally applicable method for preserving the current overwhelming imbalance of power--have started in many countries almost simultaneously in 2019, including Algeria, Bolivia (see the image below), Chile, Colombia,

Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Spain, Sudan, the UK, and Zimbabwe. They might turn out to be the starting point of Marx's prediction of proletariat revolutions. Let's keep our eyes on them...

Global Rebellions against Neoliberalism: A supporter of former president Evo Morales in Bolivia, November 13, 2019. *(AP / Natacha Pisarenko)*

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) helped establish sociology as a formal academic discipline by founding the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895 and by publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1896). In another important work, *Division of Labor in Society* (1893), Durkheim laid out his theory on how societies transformed from an old type (agricultural) to a new one (industrial). Also, his theory of *Suicide* (1897), constructed more than a century ago, is still used as a structurally clear model of sociological theories in sociological courses, such as this.

Durkheim examined suicide statistics in census data of major European countries in order to seek patterns that shaped the phenomenon. He found, to mention but a few, that suicide rates were higher among: single men compared to married men; childless people compared to parents; Protestants (who value individualism) compared to Catholics and Jews (who are bonded to other people through the church or synagogue). These findings led him to conclude that social isolation (or the lack of solidarity) was a major cause of suicide.

Suicide tends to be seen as an ultimate personal decision and, thus, as a psychological phenomenon. Durkheim, however, proved through his study based on empirical data that it is a social phenomenon to a great extent, and his study helped firmly establish the position of sociology among other fields of social science.

Max Weber (1864-1920) is known best for his 1904 book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Basically, the Christian doctrine admonishes greediness for wealth, as seen in the saying: It is easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter God’s Kingdom. However, the reformed denomination Protestantism (and Calvinism) encourages wealth as grace and labor as a devotion to God, interpreting the money as a sign of God’s selection. Weber pointed to this ethic, which no other religion maintains, as the foremost energy for the rise of capitalism.

Weber's theory of the rise of capitalism based on Protestant work ethic remains controversial. Some support Weber's theory as a plausible explanation for the rise of capitalism. Others simply dismiss the connection between "work ethic" and "capitalism," suggesting that capitalism is not the system of work ethic, but that of gigantic financial and political power.

Weber differentiated between modern and premodern societies in terms of **rationalization**, i.e., the replacement of traditions, values, and emotions as the basis of actions with rational, calculated ones. In our contemporary societies, that is, our planning is dependent on market fluctuation, labor costs, mortgage rates, inventories, and zoning regulations (Rifkin 1987, p.

69). The goal is to finish our planning in the shortest time possible, at the least cost (efficiency, profit, and utility).

By sharp contrast, planning of premodern society has to be intimately bound up with group feelings and sensitivities about traditionally perpetuated cultural norms, such as the considerations for the superstitious matters, the spirituality of the people, the mother nature, etc., etc.

Weber also offered the discussions about **bureaucratization** in order to describe modern organizations' particular characteristics. They include hierarchy of (or vertically structured) authority, the division of labor based on specialization, written (and no hidden) records and rules, and impersonality of positions and interactions--which will be examined in Ch. 6, Groups and Organization.

Summary

Sociology was developed as a way to study and try to understand the changes to society brought on by the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of the earliest sociologists thought that societies and individuals' roles in society could be studied using the same scientific methodologies that were used in the natural sciences, while others believed that is was impossible to predict human behavior scientifically, and still others debated the value of such predictions. Those perspectives continue to be represented within sociology today.

Further Research

Many sociologists helped shape the discipline. To learn more about prominent sociologists and how they changed sociology check out http://openstaxcollege.org/l/ferdinand-toennies.

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Glossary

antipositivism
: the view that social researchers should strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values

generalized others
: the organized and generalized attitude of a social group

positivism
: the scientific study of social patterns

qualitative sociology
in-depth interviews, focus groups, and/or analysis of content sources as the source of its data

quantitative sociology
statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants

significant others
specific individuals that impact a person's life

verstehen
a German word that means to understand in a deep way

Theoretical Perspectives

- Explain what sociological theories are and how they are used
- Understand the similarities and differences between structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism

Sociologists study social events and develop theories in attempts to explain why things happen as they do, referring to social conditions (attached to our society as a whole) and social locations (attached to our "self"). A sociological **theory** is an explanation of how a given phenomenon happens, connecting that to the most closely related factor. A phenomenon in question is called the "dependent variable" and a closely related factor to it, the "independent variable." (About "variable," more will be explained in Ch. 2, Sociological Research.)

For example, although **suicide** is generally considered a personal decision, Émile Durkheim connected this phenomenon to social ties, or social **solidarity**, as one of the most closely related factors. Thus, he hypothesized that differences in suicide risks could be explained by the strength of solidarity. In his theory, suicide is the dependent variable and solidarity, the independent variable, that is, suicide depends on solidarity.

Durkheim gathered a large amount of data about Europeans who had ended their lives, and indeed found differences based on the strength of social ties, solidarity. Among men of similar ages who committed suicide, for example, more unmarried ones (low solidarity) were counted than married ones (good solidarity). Similarly, Protestants, who tend to be individualistic (low solidarity), were more likely to commit suicide than Catholics or Jews, who are collectively bonded (good solidarity) within themselves.

The introductory level of sociology courses (such as this) offers three major perspectives. Called **paradigms**, they are theoretical frameworks, each of which helps understand social realities through its own lens, including structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. These three will be referred to throughout the course. So you need to, and will, become familiar with these. Only three!

Sociological Paradigm	**Level of Analysis**	**Focus**
Structural Functionalism	Macro or mid	The way each part of society functions to maintain the whole structure
Conflict Theory	Macro	Inequalities between different social locations (e.g., social class, race/ethnicity, gender, and so on)
Symbolic Interactionism	Micro	Face-to-face interactions of individuals in everyday life through socially constructed and shared symbols

Sociological Theories or Perspectives

Functionalism

Émile Durkheim, one of the giant classical sociologists, maintained that society is a complex system of interrelated and interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability (Durkheim 1893), the theoretical view called **functionalism** or structural functionalism.

Durkheim suggested that sociologists must be aware that social facts, which all serve to govern social life, are external of, and coercive to, individuals. Again, don't say "I think therefore I am."

To understand social facts, take the "language," for example. It is external of us. That is, it is our society that maintains it, not ourselves; we just learn and speak it. It is also coercive to us. No one is free from its rules; even such outlaws as gangsters follow its rules when they speak. Otherwise, other people wouldn't understand what they are saying. When a gangster means "I'll kill you" but says, "ll ll ou," people would be puzzled and say, "Excuse me? How can I help you?"

Another noted structural functionalist, Robert Merton (1910–2003), pointed out that social processes often have many functions, which simply mean "good things." There are two different types of functions: manifest functions and latent functions.

Manifest functions are good things resulting from the main purpose of a given social system, while **latent functions** are good things resulting not from the main purpose of a system, or to say, its by-products. The manifest functions of elementary school, for example, include skills in reading, writing, and calculating. Its latent functions include making friends, which is good but is not the main purpose of the system.

On the other hand, social processes that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society are called **dysfunctions**, which simply mean "bad things." Although religion has a lot of functions, for example, its negative consequences can be also seen in many religious wars in our human history.

Criticism

One criticism of the structural-functional theory is that it can't adequately explain social change. Also problematic is the somewhat circular nature of this theory; repetitive behavior patterns are assumed to have a function, yet we profess to know that they have a function only because they are repeated. Furthermore, dysfunctions may continue, even though they don't serve a function, which seemingly contradicts the basic premise of the theory. Many sociologists now believe that functionalism is no longer useful as a macro-level theory, but that it does serve a useful purpose in some mid-level analyses.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory focuses on inequalities between different social locations, such as those in social class, race/ethnicity, gender, and so on. Karl Marx (1818–1883) initiated this perspective, observing lots of conflicts between capitalists (bourgeoisie) and laborers (proletariat). According to Marx, and his partner Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), "the modern bourgeois society

that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society (called "modernization") has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established… new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones" (Marx and Engels 2002 [1848]).

Here is the golden rule of capitalism: the lower the wage, the higher the profit. That is, bourgeoisie try to set the wage level as low as possible in order to make more profit. On the other hand, of course, proletariat demand the minimum wages as high as possible. Conflict? You bet!

More recently, inequality based on gender or race has been explained in a similar manner and has identified institutionalized power structures that help maintain inequality between groups. Janet Saltzman Chafetz (1941–2006) presented a model of **feminist theory** that attempts to explain the forces that maintain gender inequality as well as a theory of how such a system can be changed (Turner 2003).

Similarly, critical race theory grew out of a critical analysis of race and racism from a legal point of view. Critical race theory looks at structural inequality based on white privilege and associated wealth, power, and prestige.

Criticism

Note:
Farming and Locavores: How Sociological Perspectives Might View Food Consumption
The consumption of food is a commonplace, daily occurrence, yet it can also be associated with important moments in our lives. Eating can be an individual or a group action, and eating habits and customs are influenced by our cultures. In the context of society, our nation's food system is at the core of numerous social movements, political issues, and economic debates. Any of these factors might become a topic of sociological study.

A structural-functional approach to the topic of food consumption might be interested in the role of the agriculture industry within the nation’s economy and how this has changed from the early days of manual-labor farming to modern mechanized production. Another examination might study the different functions that occur in food production: from farming and harvesting to flashy packaging and mass consumerism.
A conflict theorist might be interested in the power differentials present in the regulation of food, by exploring where people’s right to information intersects with corporations’ drive for profit and how the government mediates those interests. Or a conflict theorist might be interested in the power and powerlessness experienced by local farmers versus large farming conglomerates, such as the documentary *Food Inc.* depicts as resulting from Monsanto’s patenting of seed technology. Another topic of study might be how nutrition varies between different social classes.
A sociologist viewing food consumption through a symbolic interactionist lens would be more interested in micro-level topics, such as the symbolic use of food in religious rituals, or the role it plays in the social interaction of a family dinner. This perspective might also study the interactions among group members who identify themselves based on their sharing a particular diet, such as vegetarians (people who don’t eat meat) or locavores (people who strive to eat locally produced food).

Just as structural functionalism was criticized for focusing too much on the stability of societies, conflict theory has been criticized because it tends to focus on conflict to the exclusion of recognizing stability. Many social structures are extremely stable or have gradually progressed over time rather than changing abruptly as conflict theory would suggest.

Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level sociology that focuses on how individuals interact with one another in everyday life. Communication—the exchange of meaning through symbols—is believed to be the way in which people make sense of their social worlds. It is important to see that the social reality does not necessarily stem from facts, but mostly from socially

constructed meanings and images through which people interact and, by doing so, make them "real." Theorists Herman and Reynolds (1994) note that this perspective sees people as being active in shaping the social world rather than simply being acted upon.

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) is considered a founder of symbolic interactionism though he never published his work on it (LaRossa and Reitzes 1993). Mead's student, Herbert Blumer, coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and outlined these basic premises: humans interact with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society; the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances (Blumer 1969). If you love books, for example, a symbolic interactionist might propose that you learned that books are good or important in the interactions you had with family, friends, school, or church; maybe your family had a special reading time each week, getting your library card was treated as a special event, or bedtime stories were associated with warmth and comfort.

Social scientists who apply symbolic-interactionist thinking look for patterns of interaction between individuals. Their studies often involve observation of one-on-one interactions. For example, while a conflict theorist studying a political protest might focus on class difference, a symbolic interactionist would be more interested in how individuals in the protesting group interact, as well as the signs and symbols protesters use to communicate their message. The focus on the importance of symbols in building a society led sociologists like Erving Goffman (1922–1982) to develop a technique called **dramaturgical analysis**. Goffman used theater as an analogy for social interaction and recognized that people's interactions showed patterns of cultural "scripts." Because it can be unclear what part a person may play in a given situation, he or she has to improvise his or her role as the situation unfolds (Goffman 1958).

Studies that use the symbolic interactionist perspective are more likely to use qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or participant observation, because they seek to understand the symbolic worlds in which research subjects live.

Constructivism is an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be. We develop social constructs based on interactions with others, and those constructs that last over time are those that have meanings which are widely agreed-upon or generally accepted by most within the society. This approach is often used to understand what's defined as deviant within a society. There is no absolute definition of deviance, and different societies have constructed different meanings for deviance, as well as associating different behaviors with deviance. One situation that illustrates this is what you believe you're to do if you find a wallet in the street. In the United States, turning the wallet in to local authorities would be considered the appropriate action, and to keep the wallet would be seen as deviant. In contrast, many Eastern societies would consider it much more appropriate to keep the wallet and search for the owner yourself; turning it over to someone else, even the authorities, would be considered deviant behavior.

Criticism

Research done from this perspective is often scrutinized because of the difficulty of remaining objective. Others criticize the extremely narrow focus on symbolic interaction. Proponents, of course, consider this one of its greatest strengths.

Sociological Theory Today

These three approaches are still the main foundation of modern sociological theory, but some evolution has been seen. Structural-functionalism was a dominant force after World War II and until the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, sociologists began to feel that structural-functionalism did not sufficiently explain the rapid social changes happening in the United States at that time.

Conflict theory then gained prominence, as there was renewed emphasis on institutionalized social inequality. Critical theory, and the particular aspects

of feminist theory and critical race theory, focused on creating social change through the application of sociological principles, and the field saw a renewed emphasis on helping ordinary people understand sociology principles, in the form of public sociology.

Postmodern social theory attempts to look at society through an entirely new lens by rejecting previous macro-level attempts to explain social phenomena. Generally considered as gaining acceptance in the late 1970s and early 1980s, postmodern social theory is a micro-level approach that looks at small, local groups and individual reality. Its growth in popularity coincides with the constructivist aspects of symbolic interactionism.

Summary

Sociologists develop theories to explain social events, interactions, and patterns. A theory is a proposed explanation of those social interactions. Theories have different scales. Macro-level theories, such as structural functionalism and conflict theory, attempt to explain how societies operate as a whole. Micro-level theories, such as symbolic interactionism, focus on interactions between individuals.

Further Research

People often think of all conflict as violent, but many conflicts can be resolved nonviolently. To learn more about nonviolent methods of conflict resolution check out the Albert Einstein Institution
http://openstaxcollege.org/l/ae-institution

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Glossary

conflict theory
: a theory that looks at society as a competition for limited resources

constructivism
: an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be

dramaturgical analysis

a technique sociologists use in which they view society through the metaphor of theatrical performance

dynamic equilibrium
: a stable state in which all parts of a healthy society work together properly

dysfunctions
: social patterns that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society

function
: the part a recurrent activity plays in the social life as a whole and the contribution it makes to structural continuity

functionalism
: a theoretical approach that sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of individuals that make up that society

grand theories
: an attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change

hypothesis
: a testable proposition

latent functions
: the unrecognized or unintended consequences of a social process

macro-level
: a wide-scale view of the role of social structures within a society

manifest functions
: sought consequences of a social process

micro-level theories
: the study of specific relationships between individuals or small groups

paradigms

philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them

social facts

the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and all of the cultural rules that govern social life

social institutions

patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs

social solidarity

the social ties that bind a group of people together such as kinship, shared location, and religion

symbolic interactionism

a theoretical perspective through which scholars examine the relationship of individuals within their society by studying their communication (language and symbols)

theory

a proposed explanation about social interactions or society

Introduction to Sociological Research
class="introduction"

Many believe that crime rates go up during the full moon, but scientific research does not support this conclusion. (Photo courtesy of pxhere.com)

Photo cortesy: pxhere.com

Laypeople (i.e., those who've never taken social science courses, such as this) can also have their own opinions about things happening around, and within, themselves. Chances are, however, their limited personal experiences and knowledge and socially shared prejudice/stereotypes tend to lead them to views more or less biased. To check your own view, for example, answer this question: What percent of Americans today believe that it is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good, hard spanking?

Photo Courtesy of Littleton View Co, Publishers

Here is the answer. Between 2000 and 2016, 71% of respondents in a series of surveys conducted in the U.S. (n=13,038) said they believed spanking was necessary (The General Social Survey 2016). Is this answer, based on the empirical data, close to your guessing?

In order to understand what a given phenomenon is *actually* like, social scientists (including sociologists, of course) conduct research to gather data (empirical evidence) related to the phenomenon in question, in systematic fashion. The research methods include surveys, field research, experiments, and so on.

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Glossary

empirical evidence
: evidence that comes from direct experience, scientifically gathered data, or experimentation

meta-analysis
: a technique in which the results of virtually all previous studies on a specific subject are evaluated together

Approaches to Sociological Research

- Define and describe the scientific method
- Explain how the scientific method is used in sociological research
- Understand the function and importance of an interpretive framework
- Define what reliability and validity mean in a research study

Sociologists begin their research by asking a question about how or why a given phenomenon happens in a given condition but doesn't happen in another condition. In other words, they ask, "What makes the difference between 'happening' and 'not happening'?" For example, some people support "spanking" while others don't. Or some people think about "suicide" while others never do so. Sociologists now ask: What makes the difference between those who support spanking and those who don't, or between those who think about suicide and those who never do so? In order to find the answer, *as unbiased as possible*, the researcher adopts scientific approaches and sets a particular research design. The following sections describe such approaches and designs.

The Scientific Method

The scientific method involves developing and testing theories about the world based on empirical evidence. It is defined by its commitment to systematic observation of the empirical world and strives to be objective, critical, skeptical, and logical. It involves a series of prescribed steps that have been established over centuries of scholarship.

Typically, the scientific method starts with these steps: 1) ask a question, 2) examine previously conducted studies, 3) choose variables (which will be explained below), 4) formulate a hypothesis (optional), 5) design research and gather data, 6) analyze them, and 7) report the findings.

The Flow of Scientific Method

1. Ask questions about a given phenomenon;
2. Review previously conducted studies;
3. Choose variables;
4. Formulate a hypothesis (optional);

5. Design research and gather data;
6. Analyze data in search for patterns; and
7. Report findings.

Variables

Scientific studies are based on "variables." A **variable** can be defined as a characteristic that has two or more attributes through which we can see what a given object (or person) is like--or anything that varies.

Gender, for example, is a variable that has two attributes, i.e., female and male. Race is also a variable, having several attributes. What about social class (a combined variable of education, occupation, and income)? Also, marital status, sexual orientation, age...?

Something that doesn't vary is called "constant." Speed of the light is said to be a constant, for example. Or sex of people who can get pregnant is a constant. Although students' GPA is a variable, to make it sure, the final grade for a student who never took exams at all throughout the semester seems to be a constant. In short, if there's only one answer--as in sex of a pregnant person--it's a constant, not a variable.

There are two types of variables that construct a theory, namely, the **independent variable** (or X) and the **dependent variable** (Y). The former (X) is the *cause*, or the condition that can make it happen, and the latter (Y), the *effect*, or a phenomenon that is made happen. Notice that the structure of a theory consists of only two things: the dependent variable (Y) and the independent variable (X).

Having the dependent variable (or a phenomenon in question) in mind, now, choose an independent variable that seems to make it happen. Durkheim, for example, chose "solidarity" (the independent variable) that he believed shapes the suicide risks (the dependent variable). Of course, there are many other variables that can affect the suicide risks. But a theory cannot be expected to drag tens of variables within itself. So focus on as few independent variables as possible.

Formulate a Hypothesis and Construct a Theory

A **hypothesis** can be understood as a baby (or a starting point) of a theory. In terms of the structure, they are the same, consisting of only two things: the dependent variable and the independent variable. When a hypothesis is approved by a large number of scholars, it can be considered a theory. It is a statement about how the dependent variable and the independent variable are related to one another; it makes a conjectural statement about the relationship between those variables.

The chronological order between the two types of variables is this. X (the independent variable) takes place, first, and then, Y (the dependent variable) may follow. To use the theory of suicide as an example for this, X (bad solidarity) takes place, first, and then, Y (suicide) may follow.

Although this example is not sociological, to make things simple, "smoking is a leading cause of cancer and death from cancer," according to National Cancer Institute. In this case, smoking is the independent variable and cancer, the dependent variable. X (smoking) takes place, first, and then, Y (cancer) may follow.

The Rule #1 to Understand Theories

To be noted, though, theories are not about 100% or 0%, but about tendencies, or "more likely" or "less likely." Indeed, not every smoker gets cancer. Conversely, some heavy smokers don't get cancer. Can these facts nullify the theory that connects smoking and cancer? The answer is "No" because the statement is about tendencies such that smokers are "more likely" than non-smokers to get cancer. This is one of the major rules to understand what theories are about.

The Rule #2 to Understand Theories

Another rule to understand what theories are about is that no theory can be expected to spell out a phenomenon in question. To use Durkheim's theory of suicide, for example, although suicide is explained in terms of solidarity, as aforementioned, there are many other causes for suicide, such as bankruptcy, serious illness, chronic physical pain, and so forth. Should Durkheim's theory be undermined? The answer is, again, "No" because a theory is not expected to spell out a phenomenon, but to explain it in relation to as few variables as possible.

Summary

Using the scientific method, a researcher conducts a study in five phases: asking a question, researching existing sources, formulating a hypothesis, conducting a study, and drawing conclusions. The scientific method is useful in that it provides a clear method of organizing a study. Some sociologists conduct research through an interpretive framework rather than employing the scientific method.

Scientific sociological studies often observe relationships between variables. Researchers study how one variable changes another. Prior to conducting a study, researchers are careful to apply operational definitions to their terms and to establish dependent and independent variables.

Further Research

For a historical perspective on the scientific method in sociology, read “The Elements of Scientific Method in Sociology” by F. Stuart Chapin (1914) in the *American Journal of Sociology*: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Method-in-Sociology

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Glossary

dependent variables
: a variable changed by other variables

hypothesis
: a testable educated guess about predicted outcomes between two or more variables

independent variables
: variables that cause changes in dependent variables

interpretive framework
: a sociological research approach that seeks in-depth understanding of a topic or subject through observation or interaction; this approach is not based on hypothesis testing

literature review
: a scholarly research step that entails identifying and studying all existing studies on a topic to create a basis for new research

operational definitions
: specific explanations of abstract concepts that a researcher plans to study

reliability
: a measure of a study's consistency that considers how likely results are to be replicated if a study is reproduced

scientific method
: an established scholarly research method that involves asking a question, researching existing sources, forming a hypothesis, designing

and conducting a study, and drawing conclusions

validity
the degree to which a sociological measure accurately reflects the topic of study

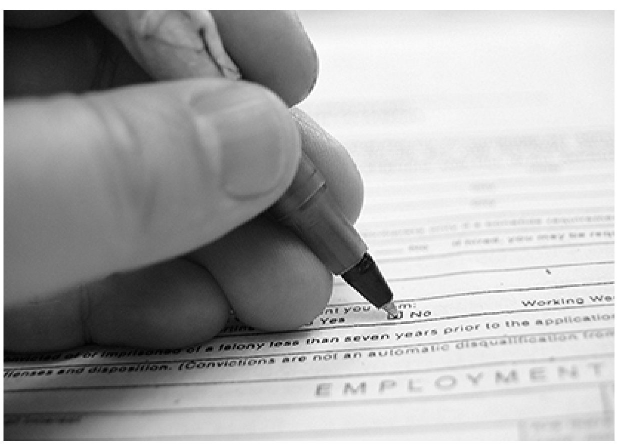
Research Methods

- Differentiate between four kinds of research methods: surveys, field research, experiments, and secondary data analysis
- Understand why different topics are better suited to different research approaches

In planning a research design, sociologists generally choose from four widely used methods of social investigation: survey, field research, experiment, and secondary data analysis (or use of existing sources). Their choice of the methods depends on several conditions, such as the limitation of time and budget, the type of their topic, the accessibility of the research target, and so on.

Surveys

As a research method, a **survey** collects data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about attitudes and behaviors, often in the form of a questionnaire. The survey is one of the most widely used scientific research methods as it can be analyzed statistically. Also, the standard survey format allows participants a level of anonymity in which they can express personal ideas about sensitive matters, such as suicide, sexuality, and the like.



Questionnaires are a common research method; the U.S. Census is a well-known example. (Photo courtesy of Kathryn Decker/flickr)

Sociologists conduct surveys under controlled conditions for specific purposes. Surveys gather different types of information from people. While surveys are not great at capturing the ways people really behave in social situations, they are a great method for discovering how people feel and think—or at least how they say they feel and think. Surveys can track preferences for presidential candidates or reported individual behaviors (such as sleeping, driving, or texting habits) or factual information such as employment status, income, and education levels.

Population and Sample--and Random Sample

A survey targets a specific **population**, all people who share a given characteristic for the researcher to study. When the size of a population is too big, the researcher chooses to survey a small sector of a population called a **sample**: that is, a manageable number of subjects that should *represent* its own entire population. Okay, but how can it (a small number of subjects) represent its own ENTIRE population?

The success of a study depends on how well the population is represented by the sample. For this, the researcher uses a **random sample**, a method in which every person in a population has the same chance of being chosen in the sample. According to the laws of probability, random samples, as long as they are random samples, well represent the entire population. See below: an analogy of how a random sample works.

1. Population, 2. Sample, 3. Random Sample, and 4. Analysis

Courtesy of huislaw.com

Courtesy of wakystock.com

Courtesy of Clipartreview.com

As shown above,

1. A population can be likened to a large pot of soup.
2. A sample, to a ladle of soup.
3. Random sample, to stirring up the pot of soup.
4. Analysis, to sipping the ladle of soup.

Through random sample, and only through it, the researcher can accurately report the taste of the entire soup, or the tendency of a large number of people (population)

through a smaller size of sample.

Here is an example. The U.S. media outlets predict the presidential election, relying on their own surveys. In this case, the **population** consists of all American voters (231 million people). The typical number of voters who respond to the surveys is a little larger than 1,000. This collection of voters whose voice is directly studied is called a **sample**. The question is, how can this small number of voters represent all American voters? Statistically saying, again, if the method of choosing the voters is **random sample**, it should be able to represent its population--although it's not easy, and some researchers fail, embarrassingly.

Here is an embarrassing example of a failed random sample. In 1936, a research institute predicted that the Republican candidate would win landslide for the presidential election, based on its own survey. The result was, however, the Democratic candidate won landslide. What was wrong? The survey collected opinions from people found in telephone books and car registration lists. Hey, who owned telephones or cars in 1936!? Only rich people!! Those who didn't own telephones or cars at that time didn't have "the same chance of being chosen in the sample," but they were a large part of the population having their own voice.

An **interview** is a one-on-one conversation between the researcher and the subject, and it is a way of conducting surveys on a topic. Interviews are similar to the short-answer questions on surveys in that the researcher asks subjects a series of questions. However, participants are free to respond as they wish, without being limited by predetermined choices. In the back-and-forth conversation of an interview, a researcher can ask for clarification, spend more time on a subtopic, or ask additional questions. In an interview, a subject will ideally feel free to open up and answer questions that are often complex. There are no right or wrong answers. The subject might not even know how to answer the questions honestly.

Questions such as, “How did society's view of alcohol consumption influence your decision whether or not to take your first sip of alcohol?” or “Did you feel that the divorce of your parents would put a social stigma on your family?” involve so many factors that the answers are difficult to categorize. A researcher needs to avoid steering or prompting the subject to respond in a specific way; otherwise, the results will prove to be unreliable. And, obviously, a sociological interview is not an interrogation. The researcher will benefit from gaining a subject’s trust, from empathizing or commiserating with a subject, and from listening without judgment.

Field Research

The work of sociology rarely happens in limited, confined spaces. Sociologists seldom study subjects in their own offices or laboratories. Rather, sociologists go out into the

world. They meet subjects where they live, work, and play. **Field research** refers to gathering **primary data** from a natural environment without doing a lab experiment or a survey. It is a research method suited to an interpretive framework rather than to the scientific method. To conduct field research, the sociologist must be willing to step into new environments and observe, participate, or experience those worlds. In field work, the sociologists, rather than the subjects, are the ones out of their element.

The researcher interacts with or observes a person or people and gathers data along the way. The key point in field research is that it takes place in the subject's natural environment, whether it's a coffee shop or tribal village, a homeless shelter or the DMV, a hospital, airport, mall, or beach resort.

Sociological researchers travel across countries and cultures to interact with and observe subjects in their natural environments. (Photo courtesy of IMLS Digital Collections and Content/flickr and Olympic National Park)

Participant Observation

In 2000, a comic writer named Rodney Rothman wanted an insider's view of white-collar work. He slipped into the sterile, high-rise offices of a New York "dot com" agency. Every day for two weeks, he pretended to work there. His main purpose was simply to see whether anyone would notice him or challenge his presence. No one did. The receptionist greeted him. The employees smiled and said good morning. Rothman was accepted as part of the team. He even went so far as to claim a desk, inform the receptionist of his whereabouts, and attend a meeting. He published an article about his experience in *The New Yorker* called "My Fake Job" (2000). Later, he was discredited for allegedly fabricating some details of the story and *The New Yorker* issued an apology. However, Rothman's entertaining article still offered fascinating descriptions of the inside workings of a "dot com" company and exemplified the lengths to which a sociologist will go to uncover material.

Rothman had conducted a form of study called **participant observation**, in which researchers join people and participate in a group's routine activities for the purpose of observing them within that context. This method lets researchers experience a specific aspect of social life. A researcher might go to great lengths to get a firsthand look into a trend, institution, or behavior. Researchers temporarily put themselves into roles and record their observations. A researcher might work as a waitress in a diner, live as a homeless person for several weeks, or ride along with police officers as they patrol their regular beat. Often, these researchers try to blend in seamlessly with the population they study, and they may not disclose their true identity or purpose if they feel it would compromise the results of their research.

Is she a working waitress or a sociologist conducting a study using participant observation? (Photo courtesy of zoetnet/flickr)

Experiments

You’ve probably tested personal social theories. “If I study at night and review in the morning, I’ll improve my retention skills.” Or, “If I stop drinking soda, I’ll feel better.” If X, then Y. When you test your hypothetical assumption through an **experiment**, your results either prove or disprove it.

There are two main types of experiments: lab-based experiments and natural or field experiments. In a lab setting, the research can be controlled so that perhaps more data can be recorded in a certain amount of time. In a natural or field-based experiment, the generation of data cannot be controlled but the information might be considered more accurate since it was collected without interference or intervention by the researcher.

As a research method, either type of sociological experiment is useful for testing *if-then* statements: *if* a particular thing happens, *then* another particular thing will result. To set up a lab-based experiment, sociologists create artificial situations that allow them to manipulate variables.

A Typical Design of Experiments

A typical--that is, not every--experimental design separates participants into two groups. One is the **experimental group** and the other, the **control group**. All other things being as equal as possible, such as age, gender, and so on, there is only one difference between the two groups, the independent variable(s). That is, the experimental group is exposed to the independent variable(s), and the control group is not. If the independent variable (X) has an effect, then, there should be a difference between the two groups in the dependent variable (Y), in a while.

A math tutoring program can be an example of the independent variable whose effects (math skills, the dependent variable) can be tested through an experiment. The experimental design is this. Children in the experimental group take the program, and those in the control group don't. In a while, if the children in the experimental group perform in math tests better than those in the control group, we can conclude that the program is functional, that is, if the program (X), then better math skills (Y).

Or some scientists conduct experiments to test if GMOs (genetically modified organisms) can cause cancer. Typically, they use mice, separating tens of them into, on the one hand, the experimental group and, on the other, the control group. Which group do you think gets GMOs? Oh, no, no, for this kind of experiments, humans cannot be used--although in the real world, we are actually getting lots of GMOs...

Secondary Data Analysis

While sociologists often engage in original research studies, they also contribute knowledge to the discipline through **secondary data analysis**. Secondary data doesn't result from firsthand research collected from primary sources, but are the already completed work of other researchers. Sociologists might study works written by historians, economists, teachers, or early sociologists. They might search through periodicals, newspapers, or magazines from any period in history.

Summary

Sociological research is a fairly complex process. As you can see, a lot goes into even a simple research design. There are many steps and much to consider when collecting data on human behavior, as well as in interpreting and analyzing data in order to form conclusive results. Sociologists use scientific methods for good reason. The scientific method provides a system of organization that helps researchers plan and conduct the study while ensuring that data and results are reliable, valid, and objective.

The many methods available to researchers—including experiments, surveys, field studies, and secondary data analysis—all come with advantages and disadvantages. The strength of a study can depend on the choice and implementation of the appropriate method of gathering research. Depending on the topic, a study might use a single method or a combination of methods. It is important to plan a research design before undertaking a study. The information gathered may in itself be surprising, and the study design should provide a solid framework in which to analyze predicted and unpredicted data.

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges
Survey	• Questionnaires • Interviews	• Yields many responses • Can survey a large sample • Quantitative data are easy to chart	• Can be time consuming • Can be difficult to encourage participant response • Captures what people think and believe but not necessarily how they behave in real life
Field Work	• Observation • Participant observation • Ethnography • Case study	• Yields detailed, accurate real-life information	• Time consuming • Data captures how people behave but not what they think and believe • Qualitative data is difficult to organize

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges
Experiment	• Deliberate manipulation of social customs and mores	• Tests cause and effect relationships	• Hawthorne Effect • Ethical concerns about people's wellbeing
Secondary Data Analysis	• Analysis of government data (census, health, crime statistics) • Research of historic documents	• Makes good use of previous sociological information	• Data could be focused on a purpose other than yours • Data can be hard to find

Main Sociological Research MethodsSociological research methods have advantages and disadvantages.

Further Research

For information on current real-world sociology experiments, visit: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Sociology-Experiments

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Glossary

case study
: in-depth analysis of a single event, situation, or individual

content analysis
: applying a systematic approach to record and value information gleaned from secondary data as it relates to the study at hand

correlation
: when a change in one variable coincides with a change in another variable, but does not necessarily indicate causation

ethnography
: observing a complete social setting and all that it entails

experiment
: the testing of a hypothesis under controlled conditions

field research
: gathering data from a natural environment without doing a lab experiment or a survey

Hawthorne effect
: when study subjects behave in a certain manner due to their awareness of being observed by a researcher

interview
: a one-on-one conversation between the researcher and the subject

nonreactive research
: using secondary data, does not include direct contact with subjects and will not alter or influence people's behaviors

participant observation
: when a researcher immerses herself in a group or social setting in order to make observations from an "insider" perspective

population
: a defined group serving as the subject of a study

primary data
: data that are collected directly from firsthand experience

quantitative data
: represent research collected in numerical form that can be counted

qualitative data
: comprise information that is subjective and often based on what is seen in a natural setting

random sample
: a study’s participants being randomly selected to serve as a representation of a larger population

samples
: small, manageable number of subjects that represent the population

secondary data analysis
: using data collected by others but applying new interpretations

surveys
: collect data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about behaviors and opinions, often in the form of a questionnaire

Introduction to Culture class="introduction"

People adhere to various rules and standards that are created and maintained in culture, such as giving a high five to someone. (Photo courtesy of Chris Barnes/flickr)

Glossary

culture
: shared beliefs, values, and practices

society
: people who live in a definable community and who share a culture

What Is Culture?

- Differentiate between culture and society
- Explain material versus nonmaterial culture
- Discuss the concept of cultural universalism as it relates to society
- Compare and contrast ethnocentrism and xenocentrism

“We don’t know who discovered water, but we’re pretty sure it wasn’t the fish” (Carpenter 1970). If the water is to the fish, then what is to the human? Oh no, don't say, "Isn't that the air?" Why? That's because this is a sociology course and because this chapter is specifically about culture. Yes, culture, one of the major social conditions that shapes what we do and how we think, is the answer to this question.

Here is a clarification of this answer. Although the fish doesn't "discover" the water while dipped in the water, if the fish got out of the water, it would painfully notice that the water is missing. Likewise, if people migrate from one society to another, or if their societies are drastically changing, they will notice how firmly their lives have been depending on their own old culture.

This is what actually happened to Europeans whose societies were drastically changing from the old type to the new one, a historically significant event called **modernization**, the main product of the **Industrial Revolution**. Having lost their old social environments and statuses--typically, peasants in small folk villages--many migrated to urban areas, 65% of whom (or 5 million), to the United States, in search for jobs (McKeown 2007).

In the new world, their old characteristics--obedient, honest, hard-working, communal, and docile--lost their values. Rather, for the same reason, for which they had been praised in their old villages, they were now looked down upon, or even discriminated against. The new environments required them to act as individuals not as folks. They must have felt as if they became the fish struggling with the water missing.

Returning to ourselves now, let’s notice that what those Europeans faced was just the starting point of social change that never ends since then.

Today indeed, our world keeps drastically changing under so-called globalization, under which people, money, and goods and services are bewilderingly moving around between, and within, the first world countries and the third world countries. Metaphorically, we've become the fish always trying to find a new way to live in such unknown environments, or maybe trying to return to the water.

Recall the definition of **culture**--a historically developed, yet ever changing set of rules, know-hows, and tools that support social life and survival both on the individual level and on the group level. As social environments keep drastically changing, we need to adjust our own culture to them, all the time, but our reactions to such changing environments are, always, far from uniform; some try to find new ways forward while others try to return to the "water" backward. This variance in our reactions can yield a variety of social issues. For example, some support the idea of "diversity" while others claim "Make America *white* again."

How would a visitor from the suburban United States act and feel on this crowded Tokyo train? (Photo courtesy of simonglucas/flickr)

Summary

Though “society” and “culture” are often used interchangeably, they have different meanings. A society is an entity in which its members interact with one another under some sets of rules, which include culture. Other than such rules (values and norms), culture also provides traditionally perpetuated ideas (know-hows) and tools that support survival both on the individual level and group level.

Further Research

In January 2011, a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America presented evidence indicating that the hormone oxytocin could regulate and manage instances of ethnocentrism. Read the full article here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/oxytocin

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CA; Center for Global, International and Regional Studies.

Glossary

cultural imperialism
: the deliberate imposition of one’s own cultural values on another culture

cultural relativism
: the practice of assessing a culture by its own standards, and not in comparison to another culture

cultural universals
: patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies

culture shock
: an experience of personal disorientation when confronted with an unfamiliar way of life

ethnocentrism
: the practice of evaluating another culture according to the standards of one’s own culture

material culture
: the objects or belongings of a group of people

nonmaterial culture
: the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs of a society

xenocentrism
: a belief that another culture is superior to one’s own

Elements of Culture

- Understand how values and beliefs differ from norms
- Explain the significance of symbols and language to a culture
- Explain the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
- Discuss the role of social control within culture

Material vs. Nonmaterial

Every culture is made up of two aspects, namely, **material culture** (any cultural matters that we can see and touch) and **nonmaterial culture** (any cultural practices that we cannot see or touch unless actions taken). Major examples of the former (material culture) include food, shelter, and clothing. Those of the latter (nonmaterial culture) include "norms and values" (discussed below), the language, religion, music, dance, cooking, art, and so on.

Both material and nonmaterial culture are related to "a set of rules, know-hows, and tools that support social life and survival both on the individual level and on the group level," the definition of culture. This means that they summarize, or succinctly stand for, what cultures are for.

Values and Norms (Nonmaterial)

Values
Within nonmaterial culture, the most important elements, in terms of attitudes (how people think) and behaviors (what they do), are values and norms. Cultural **values** are socially shared “attitudes” toward what is important and what is not. They vary across societies and change over time.

For example, “Time is money,” people say. But it is so only in our modern societies and was not in old types of societies. The clock is set at schools, factories, and offices, indeed, but it was not at farms. It became the indispensable instrument of industrialized and post-industrialized societies (Rifkin 1987, p. 102; paraphrased). Time is money today (in our modern societies) literally for those who are paid on the basis of the number of

hours they worked. It was not the case for farmers in small folk villages (premodern societies).

Other than "time," modern individuals tend to value distinction between achieved statuses and ascribed statuses (which will be discussed in Ch. 5, Society and Social Interaction), between self-interests and group's expectations, between private and public matters, between formal and informal matters, and so on.

Norms
Cultural **norms** govern socially acceptable “behaviors,” i.e., they can be seen as rules for what is appropriate to do and what is not. Just like values, they also vary across societies and change over time. This means that following the norm of one’s own society may be violating the norm of another society. This can involve “culture shock,” a social psychological phenomenon resulting from an encounter with a totally different culture--which is discussed below.

Values and norms are oftentimes closely intertwined. Using the value of "time," for example, organizing an event without caring about time can be violating a norm of middle-class people in modern societies. Likewise, making someone stay in office after hours in modern societies is violating not just a cultural norm but also a formal rule.

Likewise, in our modern societies, in which privacy is valued, visiting other people's place without a call or text message, even if it is totally informal, can be considered the violation of the norm.

Cultural Universals

Again, cultures vary. On the other hand, though, there are cultural practices called **cultural universals** that can be observed in every society, although their forms may vary. This tells us that although cultures vary, human needs seem, to a great extent, universal. For example, the language varies across cultures, but in every society, people speak their language. The language is, thus, a cultural universal. Other examples include: music, dance, art, cooking, funeral, and so forth. Their forms, again, may vary, but every

society maintains these practices one way or another, and thus, they are cultural universals.

On the other hand, though, think about cultural practices that are not cultural universals. To have kids' birthday parties, for example, isn't pizza a kind of "must"? If there were no pizza served, kids would get mad or, at least, puzzled. But is pizza a cultural universal for kids' birthday parties? Or, we need to ask, are birthday parties themselves cultural universal, or to say, does every society have them? Think about it... What about watching TV? Surfing the Internet? Drinking cold beer, listening to headbanging rock music?

Ethnocentrism vs. Cultural Relativism--and Its Discontent

Ethnocentrism

Often, people firmly believe that all other people engage in cultural practices they themselves engage in. To them, in other words, every cultural aspect of their own is culturally universal. For example, some ask, “How do you get the marriage license in your country?” In many countries, unlike the U.S., there’s no such thing as “marriage license.” Or, “What's the most popular dessert in your country?” Sorry, but “dessert” is a European cultural custom, which although many Americans share, many others don’t.

This tendency, in which “one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it,” is called **ethnocentrism** (Sumner 2002 [1907], p. 13). It is a self-centered attitude on the group level. The type of group doesn’t matter; it can be any, such as race/ethnicity, nations, cities, villages, schools, sport teams, and even gender. If that’s about “marriage license” or “dessert,” there’s no problem. If that’s about patriotism or racism, however, ethnocentrism can yield bitter conflicts.

For example, a poem “The White Man’s Burden” written at the turn of the nineteenth century not only justified the conquest of non-whites (half devil and half child, according to this poem) by whites, but it even obliged the conquerors to “take up the white man’s burden.” The spirit of this poem seems to remain intact still today (see, e.g., Easterly 2006).

The ironic aspect of this tendency is, though, that ethnocentrism is negatively related to maturity or knowledgeability. That is, the less mature or knowledgeable, the more ethnocentric, or conversely, the more mature or knowledgeable, the less ethnocentric. This means that when people claim their group's superiority loud (more ethnocentric), they are exposing their inferiority loud (less mature) without noticing as such.

The conquest and colonization involve various events, such as political dominance, economic exploitation of labor power and natural resources, and, among others, **cultural imperialism**, the imposition of culture of the stronger on the weaker. This is an extremely negative aspect of ethnocentrism. For example, Japan annexed Korea in 1910, after which the conqueror launched a program to "Japanize" Korea, ultimately requiring Koreans to adopt Japanese names and worship in Japanese Shinto shrines (see, e.g., Kane et al. 2009).

To be noted, though, cultural imperialism is not unique to colonization, and can happen in some other ways. Anglo conformity, the assimilation ideology dominant until the recent past in the U.S., can be an example; though not related to colonization, this forced immigrants to speak Anglo Saxon's language, English, and follow Anglo norms and values, such as individuality (as opposed to collectivity), self-assertion (as opposed to harmony), and so forth.

Ethnocentrism does not necessarily yield bitter conflicts. Being able to love one's own group is psychologically healthy. If a boy says, for example, "I don't respect my family," there may be some psychologically unhealthy issues in his family. Hence, his parents should say to this boy, "What's the matter? Let's sit and talk."

The same thing can be also said about the nation. Some NFL players began kneeling during the national anthem in 2016, for example, in protest against its alleged racist content. In reaction to this, instead of caring about this protest, the U.S. president fiercely screamed, "Get that son of a bitch [the NFL players] off the field right now!"

NFL Players Protesting National Anthem


Photo courtesy of ShadowProof.com

As the kneeling controversy was spreading nationwide, the NFL league introduced a new policy mandating players and team personnel to either stand for the pregame playing of the anthem or remain in the locker room. Okay, but was this it?

Not so fast. In September, 2018, a major sports apparel company, Nike, decided to use Colin Kaepernick, the former NFL quarterback who started the kneeling protest, for its "Just Do It" campaign as its face. The controversy is going up in frames, anew...

Culture Shock

Ethnocentrism can be so strong that when confronted with a totally different culture, one may experience disorientation and suffer from one's own social identity shaken up. This social psychological phenomenon is called **culture shock**. The aforementioned Europeans who migrated from their small folk villages to urban areas, for example, must have heavily experienced this. Similarly today, the first generation of immigrants may face culture shock as things and actions, normal/valuable in their sending societies, may not be so at all in their host societies.

Cultural Relativism

According to anthropologist Diane Lews (1973), anthropology emerged along with the expansion of Europe and the colonization of the non-Western world (p. 582). Although its literal meaning is “the study of humans,” it started as the study of, in reality, non-Europeans, or the colonized. As Europeans studied non-Europeans in their own views, anthropological reports back then could hardly be free from ethnocentric biases, always ranking non-European cultures below their own.

Anthropologist Franz Boas (1931 [1911]) criticized this ethnocentric tendency of anthropological reports in his era, softly suggesting that:

- It is somewhat difficult for us to recognize that the value which we attribute to our own civilization is due to the fact that we participate in this civilization...; but it is certainly conceivable that there may be other civilizations, based perhaps on different traditions and on a different equilibrium of emotion and reason which are of *no less value than ours*, although it may be impossible for us to appreciate their values without having grown up under their influence. (Boas 1931 [1911], p. 225; emphasis added)

His students, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Melville Herskovits, among others, based upon Boas’s suggestion, led the newer generation of anthropology, and their basic attitudes toward culture known as **cultural relativism** became a dominant view among social scientists in the early 20th century. They maintain that cultures are relative, and that there’s no absolute standard by which cultures can be ranked one over/under another. For example, one speaks French and the other, Chinese. Which is superior/inferior? The answer is: Neither. Cultural relativism, thus, supports the idea of “diversity” or multiculturalism.

Its Discontent

Recently, however, some have begun arguing against this view. Anthropologist Robert Edgerton (1992), for example, contends in his *Sick Societies* that if a culture maintains customs harmful to its people, especially weak ones (e.g., cannibalism, torture, infanticide, female circumcision, ceremonial rape, and so forth), we should not play with the idea of “relativism.” It’s not relative, but *absolutely* bad.

Social Changes

Cultural Lag

Social changes occur often rapidly, but people’s mentality tends to have difficulty in catching up with them. This gap between social changes and people’s unchanging mentality is called **cultural lag**. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2015 that the Constitution guarantees a right to same sex marriage. This means that any laws or actions that can hinder this right to same sex marriage are considered illegal. This is a big social change. But is people’s mentality toward same sex marriage smoothly changing in this direction? If not, that’s cultural lag.

When the topic is about "cultural lag," some scholars exclusively (and *erroneously*) focus on the gap between culture and technological innovations (see, e.g., yourdictionary.com, wikipedia.org, etc.), but same-sex marriage is not a technological innovation, is it? What causes the confusion? William F. Ogburn, who coined the term "cultural lag," described this common societal phenomenon this way:

> The various parts of modern culture are not changing at the same rate, some parts are changing much more rapidly than others; and that since there is a correlation and interdependence of parts, a rapid change in one part of our culture requires readjustments through other changes in the various correlated parts of culture. ... Where one part of culture changes first, *through some discovery or invention*, and occasions changes in some part of culture dependent upon it, there frequently is a delay in the changes occasioned in the dependent part of culture. (Ogburn 1922, pp. 200-1; emphasis added).

As emphasized above, Ogburn wrote "through some discovery or invention." This could mean, for sure, technological innovations but, ah-hah, is not necessarily limited to be so. It could be a new discovery of "marriage equality" for same-sex couples by the supreme court, behind which some people's old mentality seems to lag.

Cultural Diffusion

Unlike culture shock or cultural lag, **cultural diffusion** can be fun. It’s about social changes through “mutual assimilation” or copying each other

in diverse societies. In New York, we can observe a plenty of examples. Some non-Asian people, for example, have tattoos in Chinese characters--whose meaning they may not clearly understand, though. Think about food, as well. American food today, according to Americans, includes French fries, pizza, California role, Hamburger with Swiss cheese… Are these actually American? Really?

Summary

A culture consists of many elements, such as norms and values. It is important to note that they vary across societies and change over time. Thus, cultural lag is happening all the time, everywhere. In diverse societies observed is cultural diffusion, social changes that involve two or more different cultures.

Further Research

The science-fiction novel, *Babel-17*, by Samuel R. Delaney was based upon the principles of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Read an excerpt from the novel here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Babel-17

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Glossary

beliefs
: tenets or convictions that people hold to be true

folkways
: direct, appropriate behavior in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture

formal norms
: established, written rules

ideal culture
: the standards a society would like to embrace and live up to

informal norms
: casual behaviors that are generally and widely conformed to

language
: a symbolic system of communication

mores
: the moral views and principles of a group

norms
: the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured

real culture
: the way society really is based on what actually occurs and exists

sanctions
: a way to authorize or formally disapprove of certain behaviors

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

the way that people understand the world based on their form of language

social control

a way to encourage conformity to cultural norms

symbols

gestures or objects that have meanings associated with them that are recognized by people who share a culture

values

a culture’s standard for discerning what is good and just in society

Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

- Discuss the major theoretical approaches to cultural interpretation

Music, fashion, technology, and values—all are products of culture. But what do they mean? How do sociologists perceive and interpret culture based on these material and nonmaterial items? Let's finish our analysis of culture by reviewing them in the context of three theoretical perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalists view society as a system in which all parts work—or function—together to create society as a whole. In this way, societies need culture to exist. Cultural norms function to support the fluid operation of society, and cultural values guide people in making choices. Just as members of a society work together to fulfill a society's needs, culture exists to meet its members' basic needs.

Functionalists also study culture in terms of values. Education is an important concept in the United States because it is valued. The culture of education—including material culture such as classrooms, textbooks, libraries, dormitories—supports the emphasis placed on the value of educating a society's members.

This statue of Superman stands in the center of Metropolis, Illinois. His pedestal reads "Truth—Justice—The American Way." How would a

functionalist interpret this statue? What does it reveal about the values of American culture? (Photo courtesy of David Wilson/flickr)

Conflict theorists view social structure as inherently unequal, based on power differentials related to issues like class, gender, race, and age. For a conflict theorist, culture is seen as reinforcing issues of "privilege" for certain groups based upon race, sex, class, and so on. Women strive for equality in a male-dominated society. Senior citizens struggle to protect their rights, their health care, and their independence from a younger generation of lawmakers. Advocacy groups such as the ACLU work to protect the rights of all races and ethnicities in the United States.

Inequalities exist within a culture’s value system. Therefore, a society’s cultural norms benefit some people but hurt others. Some norms, formal and informal, are practiced at the expense of others. Women were not allowed to vote in the United States until 1920. Gay and lesbian couples have been denied the right to marry in some states. Racism and bigotry are very much alive today. Although cultural diversity is supposedly valued in the United States, many people still frown upon interracial marriages. Same-sex marriages are banned in most states, and polygamy—common in some cultures—is unthinkable to most Americans.

At the core of conflict theory is the effect of economic production and materialism: dependence on technology in rich nations versus a lack of technology and education in poor nations. Conflict theorists believe that a society’s system of material production has an effect on the rest of culture. People who have less power also have less ability to adapt to cultural change. This view contrasts with the perspective of functionalism. In the U.S. culture of capitalism, to illustrate, we continue to strive toward the promise of the American dream, which perpetuates the belief that the wealthy deserve their privileges.

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective that is most concerned with the face-to-face interactions between members of society. Interactionists see culture as being created and maintained by the ways people interact and in how individuals interpret each other's actions. Proponents of this theory conceptualize human interactions as a continuous process of deriving meaning from both objects in the environment and the actions of others. This is where the term symbolic comes into play. Every object and action has a symbolic meaning, and language serves as a means for people to represent and communicate their interpretations of these meanings to others. Those who believe in symbolic interactionism perceive culture as highly dynamic and fluid, as it is dependent on how meaning is interpreted and how individuals interact when conveying these meanings.

We began this chapter by asking what culture is. Culture is comprised of all the practices, beliefs, and behaviors of a society. Because culture is learned, it includes how people think and express themselves. While we may like to consider ourselves individuals, we must acknowledge the impact of culture; we inherit thought language that shapes our perceptions and patterned behavior, including about issues of family and friends, and faith and politics.

To an extent, culture is a social comfort. After all, sharing a similar culture with others is precisely what defines societies. Nations would not exist if people did not coexist culturally. There could be no societies if people did not share heritage and language, and civilization would cease to function if people did not agree on similar values and systems of social control. Culture is preserved through transmission from one generation to the next, but it also evolves through processes of innovation, discovery, and cultural diffusion. We may be restricted by the confines of our own culture, but as humans we have the ability to question values and make conscious decisions. No better evidence of this freedom exists than the amount of cultural diversity within our own society and around the world. The more we study another culture, the better we become at understanding our own.

This child’s clothing may be culturally specific, but her facial expression is universal. (Photo courtesy of Beth Rankin/flickr)

Summary

There are three major theoretical approaches toward the interpretation of culture. A functionalist perspective acknowledges that there are many parts of culture that work together as a system to fulfill society’s needs. Functionalists view culture as a reflection of society’s values. Conflict theorists see culture as inherently unequal, based upon factors like gender, class, race, and age. An interactionist is primarily interested in culture as experienced in the daily interactions between individuals and the symbols that comprise a culture. Various cultural and sociological occurrences can be explained by these theories; however, there is no one “right” view through which to understand culture.

Introduction to Socialization class="introduction"

Socialization is the process in which we learn the norms and values of our society from our earliest family and play experiences. (Photo courtesy of woodleywonderworks/flickr)

Socialization is defined as “the process by which we learn the ways of a given society or social group so that we can function within it” (Elkin and Handel 1989). To be a little more specific, "the ways" mean norms (rules for appropriate behaviors) and values (attitudes toward what is important and what is not) particular to our society, and "can function" means to be able to act as our society's members. Through socialization, hence, our social orientation becomes imbued with our own particular societal "color."

Prior to the process of socialization, that is, when we were new-born babies, we don't differ from each other. Italian babies, for example, don't differ from, say, Chinese babies in their behaviors. When they are happy, indeed, they smile or laugh almost in the same way; conversely, when they are unhappy, they cry almost in the same way. Through the process of socialization, however, children raised in Italian families are becoming, more or less, "Italian" and those in Chinese families, "Chinese"--although some factors other than ethnicity (especially, social class) can make a variance in this process and, hence, in its consequences.

In the following sections, we will examine the importance of the complex process of socialization and how it takes place through interaction with many individuals, groups, and social institutions. We will explore how socialization is critical to children as they develop as well as how it is a lifelong process through which we become prepared for new social environments and expectations in every stage of our lives.

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Glossary

socialization
: the process wherein people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society’s beliefs, and to be aware of societal values

Theories of Self-Development

- Understand the difference between psychological and sociological theories of self-development
- Explain the process of moral development

When we are born, we have a genetic makeup and biological traits. However, who we are as human beings, or our own "self," develops through social interaction. Many scholars, both in the fields of psychology and in sociology, have described the process of self-development as a precursor to understanding how that “self” is socialized.

Psychological Perspectives on Self-Development

Sigmund Freud
Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was one of the most influential modern scientists to put forth a theory about how people develop a sense of self. He believed that personality and sexual development were closely linked through the maturation process called **psychosexual development**. It follows the 5 major stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital (see below). Freud's (2000 [1904]) ideas about these stages are based on such developmental events as, respectively, breastfeeding, toilet training, and the growth of sexual awareness.

Stage	Age	Characteristics
Oral	0-1	Mouth-sucking
Anal	1-3	Anus-withholding/expelling poo-poo
Phallic	3-5	Touching one's own genitals
Latent	5-15	Most sexual impulses repressed, sublimated to something else
Genital	15+	Sexual experimentation with another person

The Psychosexual Stages by Sigmund Freud.

According to Freud, failure to properly engage in, or disengage from, a specific stage results in emotional and psychological consequences in adult. A person with an oral fixation may indulge in over-eating or over-drinking. An anal fixation may produce a neat freak, called “anal retentive.” A person stuck in the phallic stage may be promiscuous and/or emotionally immature. Although no solid empirical evidence supports Freud’s theory, his ideas continue to contribute to the work of scholars in a variety of disciplines.

Erik Erikson

Psychologist Erik Erikson (1902–1994) constructed a theory of **life course** with which to depict personality development that, according to him, lasts throughout an entire lifetime. It is structured with the eight stages (see below). Erikson suggested that we continuously face eight issues one by one through these stages, all of which are related to our relationships to others, such as parents, family, peers, partners, workmates, and so on. Notice that in contrast to Freud’s theory of psychosexual development based on basic human urges, Erikson’s theory of life course focuses on more social needs (Erikson 1982).

Stage	Age	Psychosocial Crisis	Significant Other(s)
1	Infant	Trust/mistrust	Mother
2	Toddler	Autonomy/shame	Parents
3	Preschooler	Initiative/guilt	Family
4	School-age	Industry/inferiority	Peer
5	Adolescence	Identity/role confusion	Peer/role models
6	Young adult	Intimacy/isolation	Partners/friends
7	Middle adult	Generativity/stagnation	Household/workmates
8	Old adult	Ego integrity/despair	One's own self looked back

The Eight Stages in Life Course by Erik Erikson.

Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget (1896–1980) initiated the psychology of **cognitive development**, focusing specifically on the age and maturity of children. Through years of face-to-face interviews with many children, he observed that the perception of the world by children changes stage by stage as their cognitive abilities mature. In other words, Piaget believed, the development of self evolves through a negotiation between the world as it exists in the child’s mind and the world that exists as it is experienced socially (Piaget 1954).

Piaget offered four stages of cognitive development which reflect the increasing sophistication of children's thought as they physically grow (Piaget et al. 2000 [1966]). His four stages include: 1. sensori-motor, 2. pre-operatory, 3. concrete operatory, and 4. formal operatory (see below).

Stage	Age	Methods to View/Handle the Reality
Sensori-motor	0-2	Bodily senses with no language or symbols; total egocentrism
Pre-operatory	2-7	Language/symbols; more “decentered” ego
Concrete operatory	7-11	Decentered ego; more social interactions; rules/group actions
Formal operatory	11+	Abstract concepts; conditional (if-then) statements; classifications

The Four Stages of Cognitive Development by Jean Piaget.

In the sensori-motor stage, children are egocentric (self-centered on the personal level) and assume that other people see, hear, and feel exactly the same as they do. “I love my mom, and all other people love my mom.” In the pre-operatory stage, children become less egocentric and enjoy “playing house” (taking the role of others) games. In the concrete operatory stage, children understand rules of games to play with other kids but still have difficulty in understanding things/ideas that they don’t

tangibly see/hear/feel. In the formal operatory stage, children understand abstract concepts, conditional statements, and classifications. To be more specific, they (some of them) become able to read/draw a map, to think about "if, then," and to see the difference between, say, racism and discrimination. So, which stage do you think you are currently in? Oops, sorry...

Sociological Theories of Self-Development

Charles Cooley

One of the pioneering contributors to sociological perspectives was Charles Cooley (1864–1929). He asserted that people's self understanding is constructed by their perception of how others view them—a process termed "the **looking-glass self**" (Cooley 1902), i.e., the self reflected in the other. Just as we set our hairstyle in front of the mirror, that is, we monitor our "self" through reactions of others to us (the mirror) with whom we interact.

When their reactions are positive, we happily confirm that we are on the right track; conversely, when they seem negative, we sadly notice that something is wrong and has to be altered. Some are good at doing this and are confident in their "self" while others may be clumsy in noticing what's wrong and have difficulty in being much confident in their "self."

George Herbert Mead

Another giant contributor to the self-development is George Herbert Mead (1863–1931). He studied the **self** as a person's distinct identity that is developed through, and *only through*, social interactions. This means that without interactions with others, the self is not possible to emerge, which means that without the society, the self is a "forget-about-it" thing. In order to engage in social interactions to grow the "self," an individual has to be able to view him/herself through the eyes of others. That's not an ability that we are born with (Mead 1934). The self is, hence, not an inborn trait; when we were born, we didn't have it. Through socialization, we learn to put ourselves in someone else's shoes and look at the world through their perspectives. Somewhat similar to Cooley above? You bet!

What is the process through which newborns are becoming individuals with "self"? Mead believed that there are 3 stages of development that all of us go through, namely, (1) imitation, (2) play, and (3) team game. During the preparatory stage, children are only capable of "imitation": they have no ability to imagine how others see things. By imitating what people surrounding themselves do and say, they learn how to eat food, how to communicate with others, and so on.

This is followed by the "play stage," during which children begin to take on the role of others. Thus, they might try on a parent's point of view by acting out grownup behavior, like acting out the mom or dad role, or talking on a toy telephone the way they see their parents do. In this stage, people with whom children *directly* interact are called **significant others**. They include, basically, parents and, if any, sibling(s).

During the "team-game" stage, children learn to take several roles at a given time and how those roles interact with each other. They learn to understand interactions involving different people with a variety of purposes. An example offered by G. H. Mead himself is a baseball game. It's a complicated game, in which everybody is playing different roles, such as the pitcher, the catcher, the batter, the first-base player... The players need to know what to do in a given situation. It's a game for grownups.

During this stage, children gradually grab *abstract* ideas about what people do in the "wider society," which Mead called the **generalized other**. Not just do they place themselves in their own "self," but now they can connect themselves to the wider society and view themselves as if they have others' wider eyes (Mead 1934; Mead 1964; paraphrased). The third-base fielder in a baseball game, for example, knows where to throw the ball he's just caught, viewing himself as if the coach is viewing him. Or when a family is taking a trip, a daughter (a grownup girl) minds the flight schedule rather than a new toy she's just got.

Summary

Psychological theories of self-development have been broadened by sociologists who explicitly study the role of society and social interaction in self-development. Charles Cooley and George Mead both contributed significantly to the sociological understanding of the development of self. Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan developed their ideas further and researched how our sense of morality develops. Gilligan added the dimension of gender differences to Kohlberg's theory.

Further Research

Lawrence Kohlberg was most famous for his research using moral dilemmas. He presented dilemmas to boys and asked them how they would judge the situations. Visit http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Dilemma to read about Kohlberg's most famous moral dilemma, known as the Heinz dilemma.

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Glossary

generalized other
: the common behavioral expectations of general society

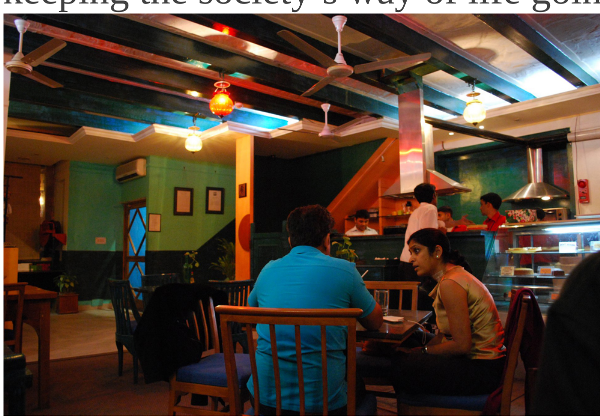
moral development
: the way people learn what is “good” and “bad” in society

self
: a person’s distinct sense of identity as developed through social interaction

Why Socialization Matters

- Understand the importance of socialization both for individuals and society
- Explain the nature versus nurture debate

Socialization is critical both to individuals and to the societies in which they live. It illustrates how completely intertwined human beings and their social worlds are. First, it is through teaching culture to new members that a society perpetuates itself. If new generations of a society don't learn its way of life, it ceases to exist. Whatever is distinctive about a culture must be transmitted to those who join it in order for a society to survive. For U.S. culture to continue, for example, children in the United States must learn about cultural values related to democracy: they have to learn the norms of voting, as well as how to use material objects such as voting machines. Of course, some would argue that it's just as important in U.S. culture for the younger generation to learn the etiquette of eating in a restaurant or the rituals of tailgate parties at football games. In fact, there are many ideas and objects that people in the United States teach children about in hopes of keeping the society's way of life going through another generation.



Socialization teaches us our society's expectations for dining out. The manners and customs of different cultures (When can you use your hands to eat? How should you compliment the cook? Who is the "head" of the table?) are learned through

socialization. (Photo courtesy of Niyam Bhushan/flickr)

Socialization is just as essential to us as individuals. Social interaction provides the means via which we gradually become able to see ourselves through the eyes of others, and how we learn who we are and how we fit into the world around us. In addition, to function successfully in society, we have to learn the basics of both material and nonmaterial culture, everything from how to dress ourselves to what's suitable attire for a specific occasion; from when we sleep to what we sleep on; and from what's considered appropriate to eat for dinner to how to use the stove to prepare it. Most importantly, we have to learn language—whether it's the dominant language or one common in a subculture, whether it's verbal or through signs—in order to communicate and to think. As we saw with Danielle, without socialization we literally have no self.

Nature versus Nurture

Some experts assert that who we are is a result of **nurture**—the relationships and caring that surround us. Others argue that who we are is based entirely in genetics. According to this belief, our temperaments, interests, and talents are set before birth. From this perspective, then, who we are depends on **nature**.

One way researchers attempt to measure the impact of nature is by studying twins. Some studies have followed identical twins who were raised separately. The pairs shared the same genetics but in some cases were socialized in different ways. Instances of this type of situation are rare, but studying the degree to which identical twins raised apart are the same and different can give researchers insight into the way our temperaments, preferences, and abilities are shaped by our genetic makeup versus our social environment.

For example, in 1968, twin girls born to a mentally ill mother were put up for adoption, separated from each other, and raised in different households.

The adoptive parents, and certainly the babies, did not realize the girls were one of five pairs of twins who were made subjects of a scientific study (Flam 2007).

In 2003, the two women, then age thirty-five, were reunited. Elyse Schein and Paula Bernstein sat together in awe, feeling like they were looking into a mirror. Not only did they look alike but they also behaved alike, using the same hand gestures and facial expressions (Spratling 2007). Studies like these point to the genetic roots of our temperament and behavior.

Though genetics and hormones play an important role in human behavior, sociology's larger concern is the effect society has on human behavior, the "nurture" side of the nature versus nurture debate. What race were the twins? From what social class were their parents? What about gender? Religion? All these factors affected the lives of the twins as much as their genetic makeup and are critical to consider as we look at life through the sociological lens.

Note:

The Life of Chris Langan, the Smartest Man You've Never Heard Of

Bouncer. Firefighter. Factory worker. Cowboy. Chris Langan spent the majority of his adult life just getting by with jobs like these. He had no college degree, few resources, and a past filled with much disappointment. Chris Langan also had an IQ of over 195, nearly 100 points higher than the average person (Brabham 2001). So why didn't Chris become a neurosurgeon, professor, or aeronautical engineer? According to Macolm Gladwell (2008) in his book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Chris didn't possess the set of social skills necessary to succeed on such a high level—skills that aren't innate but learned.

Gladwell looked to a recent study conducted by sociologist Annette Lareau in which she closely shadowed 12 families from various economic backgrounds and examined their parenting techniques. Parents from lower income families followed a strategy of "accomplishment of natural growth," which is to say they let their children develop on their own with a large amount of independence; parents from higher-income families, however, "actively fostered and accessed a child's talents, opinions, and

skills” (Gladwell 2008). These parents were more likely to engage in analytical conversation, encourage active questioning of the establishment, and foster development of negotiation skills. The parents were also able to introduce their children to a wide range of activities, from sports to music to accelerated academic programs. When one middle-class child was denied entry to a gifted and talented program, the mother petitioned the school and arranged additional testing until her daughter was admitted. Lower-income parents, however, were more likely to unquestioningly obey authorities such as school boards. Their children were not being socialized to comfortably confront the system and speak up (Gladwell 2008).

What does this have to do with Chris Langan, deemed by some the smartest man in the world (Brabham 2001)? Chris was born in severe poverty, moving across the country with an abusive and alcoholic stepfather. His genius went largely unnoticed. After accepting a full scholarship to Reed College, he lost his funding after his mother failed to fill out necessary paperwork. Unable to successfully make his case to the administration, Chris, who had received straight A’s the previous semester, was given F’s on his transcript and forced to drop out. After he enrolled in Montana State, an administrator’s refusal to rearrange his class schedule left him unable to find the means necessary to travel the 16 miles to attend classes. What Chris had in brilliance, he lacked in practical intelligence, or what psychologist Robert Sternberg defines as “knowing what to say to whom, knowing when to say it, and knowing how to say it for maximum effect” (Sternberg et al. 2000). Such knowledge was never part of his socialization.

Chris gave up on school and began working an array of blue-collar jobs, pursuing his intellectual interests on the side. Though he’s recently garnered attention for his “Cognitive Theoretic Model of the Universe,” he remains weary of and resistant to the educational system.

As Gladwell concluded, “He’d had to make his way alone, and no one—not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires, and not even geniuses—ever makes it alone” (2008).

Identical twins may look alike, but their differences can give us clues to the effects of socialization. (Photo courtesy of D. Flam/flickr)

Sociologists all recognize the importance of socialization for healthy individual and societal development. But how do scholars working in the three major theoretical paradigms approach this topic? Structural functionalists would say that socialization is essential to society, both because it trains members to operate successfully within it and because it perpetuates culture by transmitting it to new generations. Without socialization, a society’s culture would perish as members died off. A conflict theorist might argue that socialization reproduces inequality from generation to generation by conveying different expectations and norms to those with different social characteristics. For example, individuals are socialized differently by gender, social class, and race. As in Chris Langan's case, this creates different (unequal) opportunities. An interactionist

studying socialization is concerned with face-to-face exchanges and symbolic communication. For example, dressing baby boys in blue and baby girls in pink is one small way we convey messages about differences in gender roles.

Summary

Socialization is important because it helps uphold societies and cultures; it is also a key part of individual development. Research demonstrates that who we are is affected by both nature (our genetic and hormonal makeup) and nurture (the social environment in which we are raised). Sociology is most concerned with the way that society's influence affects our behavior patterns, made clear by the way behavior varies across class and gender.

Further Research

Learn more about five other sets of twins who grew up apart and discovered each other later in life at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/twins

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Glossary

nature
: the influence of our genetic makeup on self-development

nurture
: the role that our social environment plays in self-development

Agents of Socialization

- Learn the roles of families and peer groups in socialization
- Understand how we are socialized through formal institutions like schools, workplaces, and the government

Socialization helps people learn to function in their social worlds. How does the process of socialization occur? How do we learn to use the objects of our society's material culture? How do we come to adopt values and norms that represent its nonmaterial culture? This learning takes place through interactions with various agents of socialization, like peer groups and families, plus both formal and informal social institutions.

Social Group Agents

Social groups provide the first experiences of socialization. Families, and later peer groups, communicate expectations and reinforce norms. People first learn to use the tangible objects of material culture in these settings, and then are introduced to abstract ideas shared in the society, such as values and norms.

Family

Family is, usually, the first agent of socialization. Mothers and fathers, siblings and grandparents, plus members of an extended family, if any, all teach a child what he/she needs to know. For example, they show the child how to use objects (such as spoons and forks); how to relate to others (family members, friends, or neighbors); and how the world works through Pokémon, SpongeBob, and the like. As you are aware, either from your own experience as a child or from your role in helping raise one, socialization includes teaching and learning about an unending array of objects and ideas.

Keep in mind, however, that families do not socialize children in a vacuum. Many social factors affect the way a family raises its children. For example, we can use sociological imagination to recognize that individual behaviors

are affected by the historical period in which they take place. Sixty years ago, it would not have been considered especially strict for a father to hit his son with a wooden spoon or a belt if he misbehaved, but today that same action might be considered child abuse.

Sociologists recognize that race, social class, religion, and other societal factors play an important role in socialization. For example, lower-class families tend to emphasize obedience and conformity, while middle-class families emphasize judgment and creativity (National Opinion Research Center 2008). This may occur because lower-class parents have less education and more repetitive-task jobs for which it is helpful to be able to follow rules and conform. Middle-class parents tend to have better education and often work in managerial positions or careers that require creative problem solving, so they teach their children behaviors that are beneficial in these positions. This means that children are effectively socialized and raised to take the types of jobs their parents already have, thus reproducing the class system (Kohn 1977).

The socialized roles of dads (and moms) vary by society. (Photo courtesy of Nate Grigg/flickr)

Peer Groups

A **peer group** is made up of people who are similar in age. Peer group socialization begins in the earliest years, such as when kids on a playground teach younger children the norms about taking turns, the rules of a game, or how to shoot a basketball. Peer groups are important to adolescents in a new way, as they begin to develop an identity separate from their parents and exert independence. The youth tend to get the knowledge about exciting matters (such as sex) and cool things (marijuana) more from their peers than from their parents. Among other pressures, peer pressure is the strongest. Hence, when teenagers are in their peer group, even the nicest ones behave in awful ways (Redl 1966, p. 365). Most delinquent activities initiate in peer groups. ("Conformity pressure" will be discussed in Ch. 6, Groups and Organization.)

Institutional Agents

The social institutions of our culture also inform our socialization. Formal institutions—like schools—teach people how to behave in and navigate these systems. Other institutions, like the media, contribute to socialization by inundating us with messages about norms and expectations.

School

Most U.S. children spend about seven hours a day, 180 days a year, in school, which makes it hard to deny the importance school has on their socialization (U.S. Department of Education 2004). Students are not in school only to study math, reading, science, and other subjects—the manifest function of this system. Schools also serve a latent function in society by socializing children into behaviors like practicing teamwork, following a schedule, and using textbooks.

These kindergarteners aren't just learning to read and write; they are being socialized to norms like keeping their hands to themselves, standing in line, and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. (Photo courtesy of Bonner Springs Library/flickr)

School and classroom rituals, led by teachers serving as role models and leaders, regularly reinforce what society expects from children. Sociologists describe this aspect of schools as the **hidden curriculum**, the informal teaching done by schools.

Schools also socialize children by teaching them about citizenship and national pride. In the United States, children are taught to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Most districts require classes about U.S. history and geography. As academic understanding of history evolves, textbooks in the United States have been scrutinized and revised to update attitudes toward other cultures as well as perspectives on historical events; thus, children are socialized to a different national or world history than earlier textbooks may have done. For example, information about the mistreatment of African Americans and Native American Indians more accurately reflects those events than in textbooks of the past.

Mass Media

Mass media distribute impersonal information to a wide audience, via television, newspapers, magazines, radio, and the Internet. With the average person spending over four hours a day in front of the television (and children averaging even more screen time), media greatly influence social norms (Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005). People learn about objects of material culture (like new technology and transportation options), as well as nonmaterial culture—values and norms.

Summary

Our direct interactions with social groups, like families and peers, teach us how others expect us to behave. Likewise, a society's formal and informal institutions socialize its population. Schools, workplaces, and the media communicate and reinforce cultural norms and values.

Further Research

Most societies expect parents to socialize children into gender norms. See the controversy surrounding one Canadian couple's refusal to do so at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Baby-Storm

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Glossary

hidden curriculum

the informal teaching done in schools that socializes children to societal norms

peer group

a group made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests

Socialization Across the Life Course

- Explain how socialization occurs and recurs throughout life
- Understand how people are socialized into new roles at age-related transition points
- Describe when and how resocialization occurs

Socialization isn’t a one-time or even a short-term event. We aren’t “stamped” by some socialization machine as we move along a conveyor belt and thereby socialized once and for all. In fact, socialization is a lifelong process.

In the United States, socialization throughout the life course is determined greatly by age norms and “time-related rules and regulations” (Setterson 2002). As we grow older, we encounter age-related transition points that require socialization into a new role, such as becoming school age, entering the workforce, or retiring. For example, the U.S. government mandates that all children attend school. Child labor laws, enacted in the early twentieth century, nationally declared that childhood be a time of learning, not of labor. In countries such as Niger and Sierra Leone, however, child labor remains common and socially acceptable, with little legislation to regulate such practices (UNICEF 2012).

Note:
Gap Year: How Different Societies Socialize Young Adults

Age transition points require socialization into new roles that can vary widely between societies. Young adults in America are encouraged to enter college or the workforce right away, students in England and India can take a year off like British Princes William and Harry did, while young men in Singapore and Switzerland must serve time in the military. (Photo courtesy of Charles McCain/flickr)

Have you ever heard of gap year? It’s a common custom in British society. When teens finish their secondary schooling (aka high school in the United States), they often take a year “off” before entering college. Frequently, they might take a job, travel, or find other ways to experience another culture. Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, spent his gap year practicing survival skills in Belize, teaching English in Chile, and working on a dairy farm in the United Kingdom (Prince of Wales 2012a). His brother, Prince Harry, advocated for AIDS orphans in Africa and worked as a jackeroo (a novice ranch hand) in Australia (Prince of Wales 2012b). In the United States, this life transition point is socialized quite differently, and taking a year off is generally frowned upon. Instead, U.S. youth are encouraged to pick career paths by their mid-teens, to select a college and a major by their late teens, and to have completed all collegiate schooling or technical training for their career by their early twenties.

In yet other nations, this phase of the life course is tied into conscription, a term that describes compulsory military service. Egypt, Switzerland, Turkey, and Singapore all have this system in place. Youth in these nations (often only the males) are expected to undergo a number of months or years of military training and service.
How might your life be different if you lived in one of these other countries? Can you think of similar social norms—related to life age-transition points—that vary from country to country?

Many of life's social expectations are made clear and enforced on a cultural level. Through interacting with others and watching others interact, the expectation to fulfill roles becomes clear. While in elementary or middle school, the prospect of having a boyfriend or girlfriend may have been considered undesirable. The socialization that takes place in high school changes the expectation. By observing the excitement and importance attached to dating and relationships within the high school social scene, it quickly becomes apparent that one is now expected not only to be a child and a student, but also a significant other. Graduation from formal education—high school, vocational school, or college—involves socialization into a new set of expectations.

Educational expectations vary not only from culture to culture, but also from class to class. While middle- or upper-class families may expect their daughter or son to attend a four-year university after graduating from high school, other families may expect their child to immediately begin working full-time, as many within their family have done before.

Note:
The Long Road to Adulthood for Millennials
2008 was a year of financial upheaval in the United States. Rampant foreclosures and bank failures set off a chain of events sparking government distrust, loan defaults, and large-scale unemployment. How has this affected the United States's young adults?

Millennials, sometimes also called Gen Y, is a term that describes the generation born during the early eighties to early nineties. While the recession was in full swing, many were in the process of entering, attending, or graduating from high school and college. With employment prospects at historical lows, large numbers of graduates were unable to find work, sometimes moving back in with their parents and struggling to pay back student loans.

According to the *New York Times*, this economic stall is causing the Millennials to postpone what most Americans consider to be adulthood: "The traditional cycle seems to have gone off course, as young people remain untethered to romantic partners or to permanent homes, going back to school for lack of better options, traveling, avoiding commitments, competing ferociously for unpaid internships or temporary (and often grueling) Teach for America jobs, forestalling the beginning of adult life" (Henig 2010). The term Boomerang Generation describes recent college graduates, for whom lack of adequate employment upon college graduation often leads to a return to the parental home (Davidson, 2014).

The five milestones that define adulthood, Henig writes, are "completing school, leaving home, becoming financially independent, marrying, and having a child" (Henig 2010). These social milestones are taking longer for Millennials to attain, if they're attained at all. Sociologists wonder what long-term impact this generation's situation may have on society as a whole.

In the process of socialization, adulthood brings a new set of challenges and expectations, as well as new roles to fill. As the aging process moves forward, social roles continue to evolve. Pleasures of youth, such as wild nights out and serial dating, become less acceptable in the eyes of society. Responsibility and commitment are emphasized as pillars of adulthood, and men and women are expected to "settle down." During this period, many people enter into marriage or a civil union, bring children into their families, and focus on a career path. They become partners or parents instead of students or significant others.

Just as young children pretend to be doctors or lawyers, play house, and dress up, adults also engage in **anticipatory socialization**, the preparation for future life roles. Examples would include a couple who cohabitate before marriage or soon-to-be parents who read infant care books and prepare their home for the new arrival. As part of anticipatory socialization, adults who are financially able begin planning for their retirement, saving money, and looking into future healthcare options. The transition into any new life role, despite the social structure that supports it, can be difficult.

Resocialization

In the process of **resocialization**, old behaviors that were helpful in a previous role are removed because they are no longer of use. Resocialization is necessary when a person moves to a senior care center, goes to boarding school, or serves time in jail. In the new environment, the old rules no longer apply. The process of resocialization is typically more stressful than normal socialization because people have to unlearn behaviors that have become customary to them.

The most common way resocialization occurs is in a total institution where people are isolated from society and are forced to follow someone else's rules. A ship at sea is a total institution, as are religious convents, prisons, or some cult organizations. They are places cut off from a larger society. The 6.9 million Americans who lived in prisons and penitentiaries at the end of 2012 are also members of this type of institution (U.S. Department of Justice 2012). As another example, every branch of the military is a total institution.

Many individuals are resocialized into an institution through a two-part process. First, members entering an institution must leave behind their old identity through what is known as a degradation ceremony. In a **degradation ceremony**, new members lose the aspects of their old identity and are given new identities. The process is sometimes gentle. To enter a senior care home, an elderly person often must leave a family home and give up many belongings which were part of his or her long-standing identity. Though caretakers guide the elderly compassionately, the process

can still be one of loss. In many cults, this process is also gentle and happens in an environment of support and caring.

In other situations, the degradation ceremony can be more extreme. New prisoners lose freedom, rights (including the right to privacy), and personal belongings. When entering the army, soldiers have their hair cut short. Their old clothes are removed, and they wear matching uniforms. These individuals must give up any markers of their former identity in order to be resocialized into an identity as a "soldier."

In basic training, members of the Air Force are taught to walk, move, and look like each other. (Photo courtesy of Staff Sergeant Desiree N. Palacios, U.S. Air Force/Wikimedia Commons)

After new members of an institution are stripped of their old identity, they build a new one that matches the new society. In the military, soldiers go through basic training together, where they learn new rules and bond with one another. They follow structured schedules set by their leaders. Soldiers must keep their areas clean for inspection, learn to march in correct formations, and salute when in the presence of superiors.

Learning to deal with life after having lived in a total institution requires yet another process of resocialization. In the U.S. military, soldiers learn discipline and a capacity for hard work. They set aside personal goals to achieve a mission, and they take pride in the accomplishments of their units. Many soldiers who leave the military transition these skills into excellent careers. Others find themselves lost upon leaving, uncertain about the outside world and what to do next. The process of resocialization to civilian life is not a simple one.

Summary

Socialization is a lifelong process that reoccurs as we enter new phases of life, such as adulthood or senior age. Resocialization is a process that removes the socialization we have developed over time and replaces it with newly learned rules and roles. Because it involves removing old habits that have been built up, resocialization can be a stressful and difficult process.

Further Research

Homelessness is an endemic problem among veterans. Many soldiers leave the military or return from war and have difficulty resocializing into civilian life. Learn more about this problem at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Veteran-Homelessness or http://openstaxcollege.org/l/NCHV

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Glossary

anticipatory socialization
: the way we prepare for future life roles

degradation ceremony
: the process by which new members of a total institution lose aspects of their old identities and are given new ones

resocialization
: the process by which old behaviors are removed and new behaviors are learned in their place

Introduction to Society and Social Interaction
class="introduction"

Sociologists study how societies interact with the environment and how they use technology. (Photo courtesy of Garry Knight/flickr)

It was a school day, and Adriana, who was just entering eighth grade, woke up at 6:15 a.m. Before she got out of bed, she sent three text messages. One was to Jenn, who last year had moved five states away to a different time

zone. Even though they now lived far apart, the two friends texted on and off every day. Now Adriana wanted to tell Jenn that she liked the new boots in the photo that Jenn had posted on a social media site last night.

Throughout the day, Adriana used her smart phone to send fifty more texts, but she made no phone calls. She even texted her mother in the next room when she had a question about her homework. She kept in close electronic contact with all of her friends on a daily basis. In fact, when she wasn't doing homework or attending class, she was chatting and laughing with her friends via texts, tweets, and social media websites. Her smart phone was her main source of social interaction.

We can consider Adriana a typical teenager in the digital age—she constantly communicates with a large group of people who are not confined to one geographical area. This is definitely one of the benefits of new forms of communication: it is cheap and easy, and you can keep in touch with everyone at the same time. However, with these new forms of communication come new forms of societal interaction.

As we connect with each other more and more in an online environment, we make less time to interact in person. So the obvious question is this: are these forms of communication good developments in terms of social interaction? Or, if there are negative effects, what will they be? As we shall see, our reliance on electronic communication does have consequences. Beyond popularizing new forms of communication, it also alters the traditional ways in which we deal with conflict, the way we view ourselves in relationship to our surroundings, and the ways in which we understand social status.

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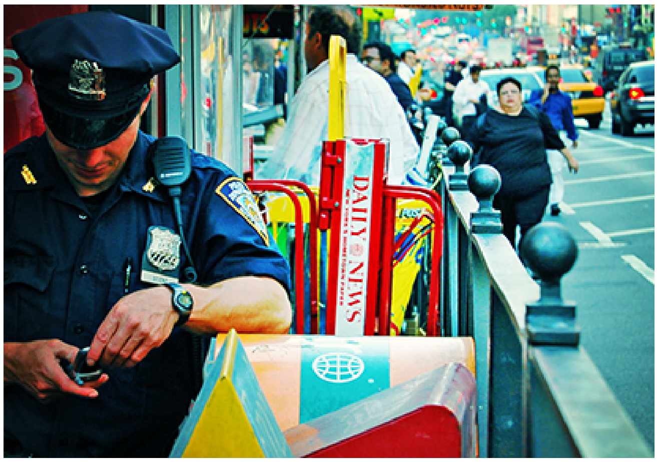
Types of Societies

- Describe the difference between preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial societies
- Understand the role of environment on preindustrial societies
- Understand how technology impacts societal development



How does technology influence a society's daily occupations? (Photo courtesy of Mo Riza/flickr)

Sociologist Gerhard Lenski Jr. (1924–2015) defined societies in terms of their technological sophistication. The societal advancement and the technological sophistication are closely intertwined, and they shape how people make living. Societies with rudimentary technology depend on the fluctuations of their environments, while industrialized societies have more control over the impact of their surroundings and thus develop different cultural features. This distinction is so important that sociologists generally classify societies along a spectrum of their level of industrialization--from preindustrial to industrial, and to postindustrial.

Preindustrial Societies

Prior to our "industrial" or "postindustrial" societies, in which we solely rely on technologies and sciences, there were "agricultural" societies preceded by "horticultural and pastoral" societies. The very first type of societies for all humans with no exception was "hunting and gathering" societies. What people do and how they think cannot remain the same when the mode of economy--one of the most significant social conditions--shifts from one to the next.

For hunters and gatherers, indeed, the unit of life was, according to anthropological studies, their tribe as a whole, rather than the individual. They say, for example, "[other members are] myself in another form" (Redfield 1947, p. 301); there was no distinction between "self" and "other" within the tribe. Everybody was a part of a solid collective life. In our own postindustrial societies, by sharp contrast, people claim, "This is MY life, not yours." Each of us lives his/her own individual life.

Hunting and Gathering

By far the longest period of time in humans' past, our ancestors lived in **hunting and gathering** societies based upon kinship and tribes. They solely depended on natural environments, acting almost as a part of the nature. They hunted wild animals and gathered plants for food. When resources became scarce, they moved to a new area to find food. Taking thousands of years, these societies, *each independently*, shifted toward horticultural and pastoral societies (i.e., domestication of plants and animals), but still today a few hundred remain in existence, such as indigenous Australian tribes sometimes referred to as “aborigines,” or the Bambuti, a group of pygmy hunter-gatherers residing in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

According to paleoanthropologists, humans are highly "social animals" and have taken this characteristic to new extremes through the development of the language (Johanson et al. 2003). Humans are also "moral animals"; there are many other animals that live in groups, but humans share food extensively with others, while, say, chimps don't. By helping each other within their groups, our ancestors got high chances for survival although,

compared to many other animals, humans are physically not very strong. Think about human kids, for example. When they begin walking, many other animals are becoming parents. Which animals could they beat up? Not so many, of course. Even a squirrel could beat them up easily, no?

Friedrich Engels (2001 [1884]), Karl Marx's intellectual partner, called this ancient social characteristic, in which humans extensively helped each other within their own groups, "the old communism" (p. 63) or **primitive communism**, referring to the collective right to basic resources, egalitarianism in social relationships, and absence of authoritarian rule and hierarchy. There was no personal property and, hence, no social stratification, meaning that all (men and men; men and women; women and women) were equal. The tribe as a whole functioned as a family, and everything (including children) was "OURS." Also, it is important to note that as women bore children, the societal arrangement was **matriarchal**, i.e., female-centered.

Horticultural and Pastoral

The earliest groups of people who began producing food artificially resided in the place we call today the Middle East. They started farming, rudimentary though, about 10,000 years ago, domesticating plants (wheat, peas, seeds...) and animals (pigs, sheep, cattle...). Their societies are called **horticultural and pastoral**. They became able to start permanent settlements. This created more stability and more material goods.

It is important to note that the shift from hunting and gathering societies to horticultural and pastoral societies did not start about the same time among humans. After those in the Middle East, indeed, it took about 1,000 years for people in India and China to start the shift, 5,000 years in Mexico, and 7,000 years in Peru, among others. As mentioned above, furthermore, some societies on this planet have never started it.

Unlike earlier hunter-gatherers who depended entirely on existing resources to stay alive, pastoral groups were able to breed livestock for, other than food, clothing, transportation and farming, and they created a surplus of

goods. After having domesticated animals, however, our ancestors didn't notice for thousands of years(!) that they could consume "milk" from those animals.

Around the time that horticultural and pastoral societies emerged, specialized occupations began to develop, and societies commenced trading with local groups. Under such circumstances, as **personal property** emerged, inequality between men and men and that between men and women began growing. Primitive communism was now disappearing, and the matriarchal societal arrangement was gradually shifting toward **patriarchal**, i.e., male-centered. Things were becoming "MINE, NOT YOURS."

Agricultural

While horticultural and pastoral societies used small, temporary tools such as digging sticks or hoes, agricultural societies relied on permanent tools and more sophisticated systems for farming. Our ancestors, for example, invented the plow to cultivate the land and the irrigation system to water the plants, and used animal power for farming. They learned to rotate the types of crops grown on their fields and to reuse waste products such as fertilizer, which led to better harvests and bigger surpluses of food. The **Agricultural Revolution** made farming not just stable but, maybe more importantly, profitable.

Settlements grew into towns and cities, and particularly bountiful regions became centers of trade and commerce. Some got more personal properties than others. Those who had more resources could afford better living and developed into a class of nobility while the majority suffered from poverty. Social stratification became clearly structured into caste/class systems, and inequalities among people grew worse. Although women helped farming, as their status was practically reduced to their men's "belongings" in such social structures, sexism became a social norm.

The ninth century in Europe gave rise to **feudal** societies. These societies contained a strict hierarchical system of power based around land

ownership and protection. The nobility, known as lords, placed vassals in charge of pieces of land. In return for the resources that the land provided, vassals promised to fight for their lords.

These individual pieces of land, known as fiefdoms, were cultivated by the lower class. In return for maintaining the land, peasants were guaranteed a place to live and protection from outside enemies. Power was handed down through family lines among nobles, with peasant families serving lords for generations and generations. Via the Industrial Revolution, however, the social and economic system of feudalism collapsed and was replaced by capitalism and the technological advances of the industrial era.

Industrial Society

In the eighteenth century, Britain experienced a dramatic rise in technological invention, leading to the event known as the **Industrial Revolution**. What made this period remarkable was the number of new inventions that influenced people’s daily lives, most notably, textile machines and steam engine. Textile machines made cotton the major product replacing wool, which was heavier, more expensive, and more difficult to handle than cotton. The steam engine helped transport cotton, together with sugar cane, tobacco, and people, way faster than before.

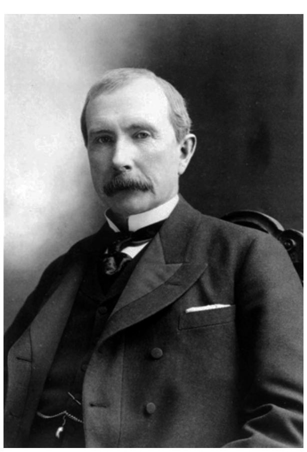
If the starting point of the Industrial Revolution is likened to the boiling point, it is the "triangular trade" that should be likened to the energy of heat. This trade involved three areas, namely, Africa, Europe, and Americas. It was structured as follows: Europe, mostly England, sent manufacturing goods to West Africa in exchange for slaves (in total, more than 3 million) who were sold to Americas, mostly Southern States of what we call today the U.S., in which they produced cotton, sugar cane, and tobacco, which were sold to Europe. After this trade started, it quickly "boiled" up the Industrial Revolution in just 10 years!

One of the results of the Industrial Revolution was the rise of urban centers. Workers flocked to factories for jobs, and the populations of cities became increasingly diverse. Some in the new generation became less preoccupied with maintaining family land and traditions and more focused on acquiring

wealth and achieving upward mobility for themselves and their families. They wanted their children and grandchildren to continue to rise to the top. If this actually happened in the U.S., it was called the "American Dream." As this doesn't happen to the vast majority of people (just like ourselves), the government frantically sells public lotteries so as not to make the "American Dream" a dead language.

It was the Industrial Revolution that, as it were, gave a birth to sociology. Life was changing quickly and the long-established traditions of the agricultural eras did not apply to life in the larger cities. Masses of people were moving to new environments and often found themselves faced with horrendous conditions of filth, overcrowding, and poverty. Social scientists emerged to study the relationship between the individual members of society and their social conditions and locations as a whole.

Power moved from the hands of the aristocracy to business-savvy newcomers who amassed fortunes in their lifetimes, or what Marx called "bourgeoisie." Families such as the Rockefellers and the Vanderbilts became the new power players and used their influence in business to control aspects of government, as well. Eventually, concerns over the exploitation of workers led to the formation of labor unions and laws that set mandatory conditions for employees. Much of our social structure and social ideas--like family, childhood, and time standardization--grew in industrial society.



John D. Rockefeller, cofounder of the Standard Oil Company, came from an unremarkable family of salesmen and menial laborers. By his death at age 98, he was worth $1.4 billion. In industrial societies, business owners such as Rockefeller hold the majority of the power. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Postindustrial Society

Information societies, sometimes known as **postindustrial societies**, are a recent development. Unlike industrial societies that are rooted in the

production of material goods, information societies are based on the production of information and services.

Digital technology is the steam engine of information societies, and computer moguls such as Steve Jobs and Bill Gates are its John D. Rockefellers and Cornelius Vanderbilts. Since the economy of information societies is driven by knowledge and not material goods, power lies with those in charge of storing and distributing information. Members of a postindustrial society are likely to be employed as sellers of services—software programmers or business consultants, for example—instead of producers of goods.

Summary

Societies are classified according to their development and use of technology. For most of human history, people lived in preindustrial societies characterized by limited technology and low production of goods. After the Industrial Revolution, many societies based their economies around mechanized labor, leading to greater profits and a trend toward greater social mobility. At the turn of the new millennium, a new type of society emerged. This postindustrial, or information, society is built on digital technology and nonmaterial goods.

Further Research

The Maasai are a modern pastoral society with an economy largely structured around herds of cattle. Read more about the Maasai people and see pictures of their daily lives here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/The-Maasai

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Glossary

agricultural societies
: societies that rely on farming as a way of life

feudal societies
: societies that operate on a strict hierarchical system of power based around land ownership and protection

horticultural societies
: societies based around the cultivation of plants

hunter-gatherer societies
: societies that depend on hunting wild animals and gathering uncultivated plants for survival

industrial societies
: societies characterized by a reliance on mechanized labor to create material goods

information societies

societies based on the production of nonmaterial goods and services

pastoral societies

societies based around the domestication of animals

society

a group of people who live in a definable community and share the same culture

Theoretical Perspectives on Society

- Describe Durkhiem’s functionalist view of society
- Understand the conflict theorist view of society
- Explain Marx’s concepts of class and alienation
- Identify how symbolic interactionists understand society

Warren Buffett’s ideas about taxation and spending habits of the very wealthy are controversial, particularly since they raise questions about America’s embedded system of class structure and social power. The three major sociological paradigms differ

in their perspectives on these issues. (Photo courtesy of Medill DC/flickr)

There are three prominent sociological theorists who contributed to the foundation of "sociology" a lot, namely, Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. They offered their own perspectives on society in ways quite different from each other. They explain what's going on under **modernization**, the process in which the old types of societies are shifting towards the new ones, *endlessly*.

Émile Durkheim and Functionalism

As the founder of functionalism or structural functionalism, Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) offered his own perspectives on society that stressed the necessary interconnectivity of all of its elements. To Durkheim, society (the whole) was greater than the sum of its parts (individuals). Think about a living thing, for example. It's a collection of atoms. Although none of the atoms involved in it has a life, when they get together, a life emerges.

Durkheim asserted that individual behavior was not the same as collective behavior, and called the communal behaviors and attitudes of a society (the whole) the **collective conscience**, an emerged life upon collective behavior. To Durkheim, hence, the key factor in collective conscience was **social solidarity**, or the strength of social ties.

Durkheim likened society to a living organism, in which each organ plays a necessary role in keeping the being alive. Even the socially deviant members of society are necessary, Durkheim argued, as punishments for deviance affirm established cultural values and norms. That is, punishment of a crime reaffirms our moral consciousness. “A crime is a crime because

we condemn it," Durkheim wrote in 1893. "An act offends the common consciousness not because it is criminal, but it is criminal because it offends that consciousness" (Durkheim 1893). Durkheim called these elements of society "social facts," which are external of, and coercive to, the individual.

Preindustrial societies, Durkheim explained, were held together by **mechanical solidarity**, a type of social order maintained by the collective conscience of a culture. This solidarity is typical for similar people in small folk villages. They are similar in occupation (farmers), religion (only one religion), and lifestyle (precisely based upon traditional ways). People are tied to each other through kinship and a low division of labor.

In industrial societies, mechanical solidarity was replaced with **organic solidarity**, the social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences. This solidarity is typical for different people in big urban cities. They engage in different jobs, worship, if any, different religions, and choose a variety of lifestyles of their own. Durkheim likened modern societies to, as aforementioned, a living organism, in which each organ plays different roles. By doing so, the entire body (the society) can maintain its health, and as the body is healthy, each organ (the individual) can survive. This is called "division of labor," whose level is, unlike premodern societies, quite high in modern societies.

While the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity is, in the long run, advantageous for a society, Durkheim noted that it can be a time of chaos and "normlessness." One of the outcomes of the transition is what he called **anomie**, normlessness. It is a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective conscience. People, while more interdependent to accomplish complex tasks, are also alienated from each other. Anomie is experienced when societies are drastically changing, such as those under modernization, and the level of diversity is becoming extreme, such as that in, maybe, New York.

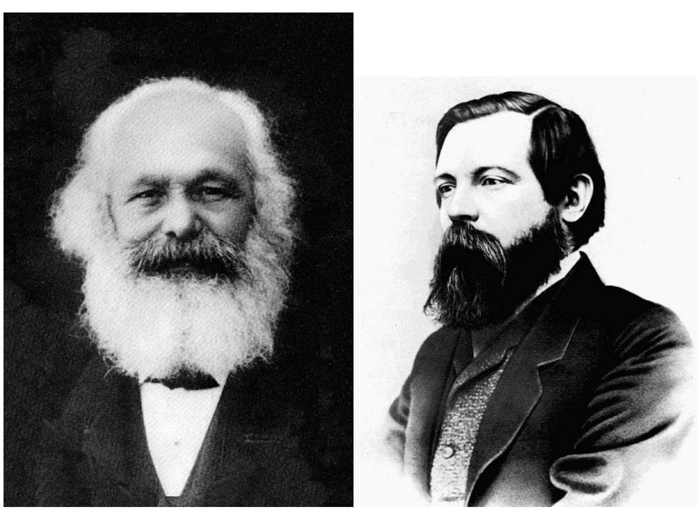
Karl Marx and Conflict Theory

Karl Marx (1818–1883) is certainly among the most significant social thinkers in recent history. While there are many critics of his work, it is still

widely respected and influential. For Marx, society’s constructions were predicated upon the idea of “base and superstructure.” This term refers to the idea that a society’s economic character forms its base, upon which rests the culture and social institutions, the superstructure. For Marx, it is the base (economy) that determines what a society is like.

Marx saw conflict in society as the primary means of change. Economically, he observed conflict going on between the owners of the means of production—the **bourgeoisie**—and the laborers, called the **proletariat**. In the mid-nineteenth century, as industrialization was booming, industrial employers, the "owners of the means of production" in Marx's terms, became more and more exploitative toward the working class. Here is the golden rule of capitalism: the lower the wage, the higher the profit.

Observing the exploitative labor conditions under **capitalism**, Marx and Engels argued that "The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established... new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones (Marx and Engels 2002 [1848]). They bitterly called capitalism “dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.”



Karl Marx (left) and Friedrich Engels (right) analyzed differences in social

power between “have” and “have-not” groups. (Photo (a) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of George Lester/Wikimedia Commons)

In preindustrial societies, there was a firm connection between the worker and the product. Farmers planned, and knew, what and how they were producing with other folks. With the bourgeoisie revolution and the rise of capitalism, however, workers themselves are reduced to just a part of the process of production. Marx described modern society in terms of **alienation**, the condition in which workers are isolated and divorced from their work, other workers, the product they make, and hence, the sense of self, and feel as if they became a part of gigantic machines rather than humans. Marx defined four specific types of alienation (you can skip these).

Alienation from the product of one’s labor. An industrial worker does not have the opportunity to relate to the product he labors on. Instead of training for years as a watchmaker, an unskilled worker can get a job at a watch factory pressing buttons to seal pieces together. The worker does not care if he is making watches or cars, simply that the job exists. In the same way, a worker may not even know or care what product to which he is contributing. A worker on a Ford assembly line may spend all day installing windows on car doors without ever seeing the rest of the car. A cannery worker can spend a lifetime cleaning fish without ever knowing what product they are used for.

Alienation from the process of one’s labor. A worker does not control the conditions of her job because she does not own the means of production. If a person is hired to work in a fast food restaurant, she is expected to make the food the way she is taught. All ingredients must be combined in a particular order and in a particular quantity; there is no room for creativity or change. An employee at Burger King cannot decide to change the spices used on the fries in the same way that an employee on a Ford assembly line

cannot decide to place a car’s headlights in a different position. Everything is decided by the bourgeoisie who then dictate orders to the laborers.

Alienation from others. Workers compete, rather than cooperate. Employees vie for time slots, bonuses, and job security. Even when a worker clocks out at night and goes home, the competition does not end. As Marx commented in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), “No sooner is the exploitation of the laborer by the manufacturer, so far at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portion of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker.”

Alienation from one’s self. A final outcome of industrialization is a loss of connectivity between a worker and her occupation. Because there is nothing that ties a worker to her labor, there is no longer a sense of self. Instead of being able to take pride in an identity such as being a watchmaker, automobile builder, or chef, a person is simply a cog in the machine.

Taken as a whole, then, alienation in modern society means that an individual has no control over his life. Even in feudal societies, a person controlled the manner of his labor as to when and how it was carried out. But why, then, does the modern working class not rise up and rebel? (Indeed, Marx predicted that this would be the ultimate outcome and collapse of capitalism.)

Marx offered a pair of concepts that describe workers' cognition about their own status, namely, **false consciousness**, or "class in itself," and **class consciousness**, "class for itself." "False consciousness" is a cognition in which the proletariat falsely support ideas or ideologies that can benefit the bourgeoisie rather than themselves. Ideas such as the emphasis of competition over cooperation, for example, support capitalism, in which the proletariat suffer from exploitation and aforementioned alienation. Or some people mistakenly believe that just because they own, say, iPhone X (bought on eBay) necessarily means that they belong to capitalist class.

"Class consciousness" is the awareness of one’s rank in society and the readiness to argue for his/her class itself. Only once society entered this state of political consciousness would it be ready for a social change. In the

end of their book *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels urged, "Workers of the world, unite!" (Marx and Engels 2002 [1848])

So "get up, stand up, stand up for your rights. Don't give up the fight!"

An assembly line worker installs car parts with the aid of complex machinery. Has technology made this type of labor more or less alienating? (Photo courtesy of Carol Highsmith/Wikimedia Commons)

Max Weber

While Karl Marx can be seen as standing for working class, Max Weber is often seen as a "sophisticated Marx," or standing for middle class. Like Marx, yet, Weber critically warned that modernization and industrialization would have negative impacts on individuals.

Weber’s primary focus on the structure of society lays in the elements of class, status, and power. Similar to Marx, Weber saw class as economically

determined. Society, he believed, was split between owners and laborers. Status, on the other hand, was based on noneconomic factors such as education, kinship, and religion. Both status and class determined an individual's power, or influence over ideas. Unlike Marx, Weber believed that these ideas formed the base of society.

See? He was more sophisticated, right?

Weber's analysis of modern society centered around the concept of **rationalization**. A rational society is one built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition. To Weber, capitalism is entirely rational. Although this leads to efficiency and merit-based success, however, it can have negative effects when taken to the extreme. In some modern societies, this is seen when rigid routines and strict design lead to a mechanized work environment and a focus on producing identical products in every location. Looks like "alienation"?

For Weber, the culmination of industrialization, rationalization, and the like results in what he called the **iron cage**, in which the individual is trapped by institutions and bureaucracy. The idea is similar to Marx's alienation (you can go back to the page you skipped and read it, if you want to).

Cubicles are used to maximize individual workspace in an office. Such

structures may be rational, but they are also isolating. (Photo courtesy of Tim Patterson/flickr)

Summary

Émile Durkheim believed that as societies advance, they make the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. For Karl Marx, society exists in terms of class conflict. With the rise of capitalism, workers become alienated from themselves and others in society. Sociologist Max Weber noted that the rationalization of society can be taken to unhealthy extremes.

Further Research

One of the most influential pieces of writing in modern history was Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*. Visit this site to read the original document that spurred revolutions around the world: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Communist-Party

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Glossary

alienation
: an individual's isolation from his society, his work, and his sense of self

anomie
: a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective consciousness

bourgeoisie
: the owners of the means of production in a society

capitalism
: a way of organizing an economy so that the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) are owned by individual people and companies rather than by the government

class consciousness
: the awareness of one's rank in society

collective conscience
: the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society

false consciousness
: a person's beliefs and ideology that are in conflict with her best interests

iron cage
: a situation in which an individual is trapped by social institutions

mechanical solidarity
: a type of social order maintained by the collective consciousness of a culture

organic solidarity
a type of social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences

proletariat
the laborers in a society

rationalization
a belief that modern society should be built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition

social integration
how strongly a person is connected to his or her social group

Social Constructions of Reality

- Understand the sociological concept of reality as a social construct
- Define roles and describe their places in people's daily interactions
- Explain how individuals present themselves and perceive themselves in a social context

Who are we? What role do we play in society? According to symbolicinteractionists, we construct reality through our interactions with others. In a way, our day-to-day interactions are like those of actors on a stage. (Photo courtesy of Jan Lewandowski/flickr)

W.I. Thomas's notable **Thomas theorem** states, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928). That is, social reality (as opposed to natural reality) stems not necessarily from objective facts, but from socially constructed meanings and images, regardless of if they are factual or just imaginary. Under the Cold War, for example, Americans feared Communism as dangerous (definition), and began suspecting each other to be communists, many of whom as a result lost their jobs (consequence).

Thomas states that our moral codes and social norms are created by “successive definitions of the situation.” Similarly, Robert K. Merton offered **self-fulfilling prophecy**. By this, Merton meant that even a false idea can become true if it is acted upon. Assume, for example, that there is a rumor that a given bank is going bankrupt. What would you do if you keep most of your money in this bank? You'd become crazy, run to this bank, and demand all of your cash! But what if all customers did the same? As banks rarely have that much money on hand, the bank may run out of money, fulfilling the customers’ rumor (or prophecy), regardless of if it is factual or just imaginary. The Great Depression of the 1930s, indeed, started this way!

The story line of a self-fulfilling prophecy appears in many literary works, perhaps most famously in the story of Oedipus. Oedipus is told by an oracle that he will murder his father and marry his mother. In going out of his way to avoid his fate, Oedipus inadvertently fulfills it. Oedipus’s story illustrates one way in which members of society contribute to the social construction of reality.

(Photo courtesy of Jean-Antoine-Theodore Giroust/Wikimedia Commons)

Structure, Statuses, and Roles


Courtesy of pixabay.com

Buildings have their own "structures," which may consist of the walls, the roof, the doors, the windows, the floors, and so forth. These parts can be considered "statuses" of a structure that are assigned their own "roles" to play.

Likewise, each society has its own **structure**. To make things simple, take the family shown above as a small-size society, for example. This family structure consists of the 4 members (excluding the dog and the cat), namely, dad, mom, the daughter, and the son, which we call the **statuses** of this family. To each of these statuses, its own **roles** are assigned to play.

The father acts as the father to his children, and so does the mother. The daughter acts to her parents as the daughter, and so does the son.

Notice, the man called the father above is not the father to his wife; he is the husband to her. Likewise, the woman called the mother is the wife to her

husband. Then, think about this: What is the girl called the daughter to the boy called the son? They are, in such relations, the sister and the brother to each other. This means that each one of them (and ourselves) has multiple statuses, depending on the situation, or the type of societies he/she belongs to.

In fact, the father may be an assistant manager in his workplace. He may not act to his boss or his customers in a manner in which he talks to his son home. Likewise, when the children go to school, their statuses are students to their teachers and friends to their classmates, needless to say, not the daughter or the son. Accordingly, they interact with others.

In short, what they (and we) are doing in a given situation is play their (our) own **roles** assigned to their (our) **statuses** in a given social **structure**. So if we get the information about people's statuses in a given social structure, we can predict, to a great extent, how they interact with each other. Think about the way, for example, the professor of your sociology course acts to the chairperson of the department, or to his wife. Could that be the same as he does to his students, or to his son? Think about it...

There are two different types of **statuses**. One is **ascribed statuses** and the other, **achieved statuses**. Examples of ascribed statuses include race/ethnicity, gender, and so on. They are "given" to us. Those of achieved statuses are college degrees, any kinds of license, and so on. They are "gotten" by ourselves.

It's not easy to draw a clear boundary between ascribed statuses and achieved statuses, sometimes. Take religion, for example. It can be considered ascribed, if we follow our parents' religion. It can be an achieved status, however, if we convert from one religion to another. Or nationality is usually an ascribed status, but for many immigrants, the U.S. citizenship is an achieved status.

Summary

Society is based on the social construction of reality. How we define society influences how society actually is. Likewise, how we see other people

influences their actions as well as our actions toward them. We all take on various roles throughout our lives, and our social interactions depend on what types of roles we assume, who we assume them with, and the scene where interaction takes place.

Further Research

TV Tropes is a website where users identify concepts that are commonly used in literature, film, and other media. Although its tone is for the most part humorous, the site provides a good jumping-off point for research. Browse the list of examples under the entry of “self-fulfilling prophecy.” Pay careful attention to the real-life examples. Are there ones that surprised you or that you don’t agree with? http://openstaxcollege.org/l/tv-tropes

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Glossary

achieved status
: the status a person chooses, such as a level of education or income

ascribed status
: the status outside of an individual’s control, such as sex or race

habitualization
: the idea that society is constructed by us and those before us, and it is followed like a habit

institutionalization
: the act of implanting a convention or norm into society

looking-glass self
our reflection of how we think we appear to others

roles
patterns of behavior that are representative of a person’s social status

role-set
an array of roles attached to a particular status

role conflict
a situation when one or more of an individual’s roles clash

role performance
the expression of a role

role strain
stress that occurs when too much is required of a single role

self-fulfilling prophecy
an idea that becomes true when acted upon

status
the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to his or her rank and role in society

Thomas theorem
how a subjective reality can drive events to develop in accordance with that reality, despite being originally unsupported by objective reality

# Introduction to Groups and Organizations
class="introduction"

Over the past decade, a grassroots effort to raise awareness of certain political issues has gained in popularity. As a result, Tea Party groups have popped up in nearly every community across the country. The followers of the Tea Party have charged themselves with calling “awareness to any issue which challenges the security, sovereignty, or domestic tranquility of our beloved nation, the United States of America” (Tea Party, Inc. 2014). The group takes its name from the famous so-called Tea Party that occurred in Boston Harbor in 1773. Its membership includes people from all walks of life who are taking a stand to protect their values and beliefs. Their beliefs tend to be anti-tax, anti-big government, pro-gun, and generally politically conservative.

Tea Party politicians have been elected to several offices at the national, state, and local levels. In fact, Alabama, California, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, and Texas all had pro-Tea Party members win seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. On the national stage, Tea Partiers are actively seeking the impeachment of President Barrack Obama for what they refer to “flagrant violations,” including forcing national healthcare (Obamacare) on the country, gun grabbing, and failing to protect victims of the terror attack on U.S. diplomatic offices in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012.

At the local level, Tea Party supporters have taken roles as mayors, county commissioners, city council members, and the like. In a small, rural, Midwestern county with a population of roughly 160,000, the three county commissioners who oversee the operation and administration of county government were two Republicans and a Democrat for years. During the 2012 election, the Democrat lost his seat to an outspoken Tea Party Republican who campaigned as pro-gun and fiscally conservative. He vowed to reduce government spending and shrink the size of county government.

The
national
tour of the

Tea Party Express visited Minnesota and held a rally outside the state capitol building. (Photo courtesy of Fibonacci Blue/flickr)

Groups like political parties are prevalent in our lives and provide a significant way we understand and define ourselves—both groups we feel a connection to and those we don't. Groups also play an important role in society. As enduring social units, they help foster shared value systems and are key to the structure of society as we know it. There are three primary sociological perspectives for studying groups: Functionalist, Conflict, and Interactionist. We can look at the Tea Party movement through the lenses of these methods to better understand the roles and challenges that groups offer.

The Functionalist Perspective
The Functionalist perspective is a big-picture, macro-level view that looks at how different aspects of society are intertwined. This perspective is based on the idea that society is a well-balanced system with all parts necessary to the whole, and it studies the roles these parts play in relation to the whole. In the case of the Tea Party Movement, a Functionalist might look at what macro-level needs the movement serves. For example, a Structural Functionalist might ask how the party forces people to pay attention to the economy.

The Conflict Perspective
The Conflict perspective is another macro-analytical view, one that focuses on the genesis and growth of inequality. A conflict theorist studying the Tea Party Movement might look at how business interests have manipulated the system over the last 30 years, leading to the gross inequality we see today. Or this perspective might explore how the massive redistribution of wealth from the middle class to the upper class could lead to a two-class system reminiscent of Marxist ideas.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective
A third perspective is the Symbolic Interaction or Interactionist perspective. This method of analyzing groups takes a micro-level view. Instead of studying the big picture, these researchers look at the day-to-day interactions of groups. Studying these details, the Interactionist looks at issues like leadership style and group dynamics. In the case of the Tea Party Movement, Interactionists might ask, "How does the group dynamic in New York differ from that in Atlanta?" Or, "What dictates who becomes the

de facto leader in different cities—geography, social dynamics, economic circumstances?”

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Types of Groups

- Understand primary and secondary groups as the two sociological groups
- Recognize in-groups and out-groups as subtypes of primary and secondary groups
- Define reference groups

Defining a Group

The term **group** refers to any collection of two or more people who share some sense of togetherness and belongingness, or of a group consciousness. This tells us that just because people share the same physical space does not necessarily mean that they are a group. People who happen to, say, take the same subway train and who are strangers to each other are considered an **aggregate**, or a crowd. Another type of nongroup is a **category**, a collection of people who share similar characteristics but who are not tied to one another. Students who got more than 40 credits and whose GPA is higher than 3.50 can be considered a category, for example. So strictly saying, although even sociologists use the word a "racial group," if people belonging to a given race do not share a group consciousness, we'd better use the word a "racial category," instead.

People in a group don't have to be together oftentimes. If they share a particular interest or consciousness, and if they know it, then, they can be considered a group. People who fanatically support the NY Yankees at the Yankee Stadium, for example, are usually not together all other times, but they share the similar emotions at the stadium, and clearly know it. Hence, they are a group. Similarly, people who keep shaking their heads violently throughout a rock concert (or headbanging?) are a group, as well.

Interestingly, people within an aggregate or category can become a group. After a disastrous hurricane, for example, people in a middle-class (a category) neighborhood (an aggregate) who did not know each other may become friendly and help each other. Or children who happen to be in the same playground and who don't know each other are initially an aggregate. When an ice cream truck comes, playing that music loud, however, and

when they now enjoy licking the ice cream together and smile at each other, they may be a group.

Types of Groups

Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) offered the idea of **primary groups**, a "certain fusion of individualities in a common whole" (1909). In a word, it is a "we." Its members view this group and other members (e.g., close friends and family members) as *end* in themselves (or “goal”) and valuable in their own right. In this group, in which its members' emotions are satisfied, "expressive ties" predominate.

On the other hand, “instrumental ties” predominate in **secondary groups**; we perceive this group as *means* (or “tool”) rather than as *end* in its own right. Examples of this group include "workplace" and "school." The main purpose for workers to belong to a workplace is not the group or other workers, but something else, i.e., the wages! Likewise, the main purpose for students to attend a school is not the group or other students, but the degree and the certificate!

In the old type of societies, there was no clear cut between the two types of groups. Peasant family members, for example, worked together. Or school teachers acted as if they were their students' parents. Even in modern societies, on the other hand, members of secondary groups can develop some forms of primary groups. Workers become friends to each other, for example. Or professors observe--often enviously--some of their students getting into romantic relationships.

Engineering and construction students gather around a job site. How do your academic interests define your in- and out-groups? (Photo courtesy of USACEpublicaffairs/flickr)

In-Groups and Out-Groups

One of the ways that groups can be powerful is through inclusion, and its inverse, exclusion. The insiders in a we-group are in a relation of peace and "loyalty" to each other; their relation to all outsides, of others-groups, is one of war and "antagonism." Sociologist William Sumner (1840–1910) offered the concepts of **in-group** and **out-group** to explain this social psychological phenomenon (Sumner 2002 [1907]).

When the hatred against, or the fear for, a given out-group (or "they") grows, the in-group ("we") solidarity can be heightened, in a clearly correlative relation. This means that when there's no "they," there's no "we." As "they" emerges, so does "we." When the Nazi Germany scapegoated Jewish citizens as "they," for example, most Germans suffering from the devastating consequences of the WWI defeat turned out to be a solid "we" and fervently supported the Nazis, the new hero to the "we." Once caught in this social psychological phenomenon, people's perception can be twisted

to such an extent that harming "they" is not just justified but comes to be viewed as heroic.

Watching our own society, we can easily find this "we"-"they" phenomenon. According to the New York Times (2019), for example, "However often President Trump strays from his favored political strategy, he faithfully returns to it like a dog to a bone: first, polarize the American electorate along racial, cultural and economic lines, then exploit the schisms that have supplanted the class divisions that were once central to both American and European partisan politics." For this new "hero" for America, to be more specific, Hispanics and Muslims are "they" to be scapegoated.

Summary

Groups largely define how we think of ourselves. There are two main types of groups: primary and secondary. As the names suggest, the primary group is the long-term, complex one. People use groups as standards of comparison to define themselves—both who they are and who they are not. Sometimes groups can be used to exclude people or as a tool that strengthens prejudice.

Further Research

For more information about cyberbullying causes and statistics, check out this website: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Cyberbullying

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Glossary

aggregate
: a collection of people who exist in the same place at the same time, but who don't interact or share a sense of identity

category
: people who share similar characteristics but who are not connected in any way

expressive function
: a group function that serves an emotional need

group
: any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share some sense of aligned identity

in-group
: a group a person belongs to and feels is an integral part of his identity

instrumental function
: being oriented toward a task or goal

out-group
: a group that an individual is not a member of, and may even compete with

primary groups
: small, informal groups of people who are closest to us

reference groups
: groups to which an individual compares herself

secondary groups
: larger and more impersonal groups that are task-focused and time limited

Group Size and Structure

- How size influences group dynamics
- Different styles of leadership
- How conformity is impacted by groups

Cadets illustrate how strongly conformity can define groups. (Photo courtesy David Spender/flickr)

Group Leadership

Often, larger groups require some kind of leadership. In small, primary groups, leadership tends to be informal. After all, most families don’t take a vote on who will rule the group, nor do most groups of friends. This is not to say that *de facto* leaders don’t emerge, but formal leadership is rare. In secondary groups, leadership is usually more overt and formal. There are often clearly outlined roles and responsibilities, with a chain of command to follow. Some secondary groups, like the military, have highly structured and clearly understood chains of command, and many lives depend on those. Other secondary groups, like a workplace or a classroom, also have formal leaders, but the styles and functions of leadership can vary significantly.

Leadership function refers to the main focus or goal of the leader. An **instrumental leader** is one who is goal-oriented and largely concerned with accomplishing set tasks. We can imagine that the army captain or the manager of professional sport teams would be an instrumental leader. In contrast, **expressive leaders** are more concerned with maintaining emotional health, and ensuring that people feel supported. Social and religious leaders—rabbis, priests, imams, directors of youth homes, and social service programs—are often perceived as expressive leaders.

Closely related to these leadership functions, there are three different leadership styles, namely, democratic leaders, laissez-faire leaders, and authoritarian leaders.

Leadership Style	**The Power Balance Between the Group and Its Members**	**Example**
Democratic	Group = Members	The U.S. government
Laissez-Faire	group < MEMBERS	Scholars' organizations
Authoritarian	GROUP > members	Sports teams, military

The Three Major Leadership Styles

In order to understand these different leadership styles, we should compare them in terms of "the power balance between the group and its members" (as shown above). Under **democratic leaders**, the power balance between them is (or has to be) even. The group cannot force its members to do something without their agreement. What's going on between them is, hence, negotiations all the time. An example of this leadership style is (or

should be) the U.S. government. The U.S. president (the top leader), indeed, cannot lead the nation, say, to a war without the support of the people, who are (should be) well represented by Senators and Representatives.

Under a **laissez-faire leader** (“leave it alone” in French), the group doesn't have power. It is a hands-off leadership, allowing its members to self-manage and make their own decisions. An example of this kind of leader might be scholars' organizations, such as the American Sociological Association. The organization has the leader, or the president, but he/she doesn't control its members' research topics or directions. The danger of this leadership is, to be noted, that although this style can work well with highly motivated and mature participants who themselves have clear goals and guidelines, if this style were implemented in, say, a kindergarten class, the situation would be chaotic, and parents would get mad.

Under an **authoritarian leader**, the group has the entire power, and its members are required to act for the sake of the group. The leader issues orders and assigns tasks to accomplish the group's goal. As aforementioned in the discussion about the "instrumental leader" above, the army captain and the manager of professional sport teams operate their jobs with this style. In order to win the games or wars, they lead their groups, and their members simply follow the leaders' decisions.

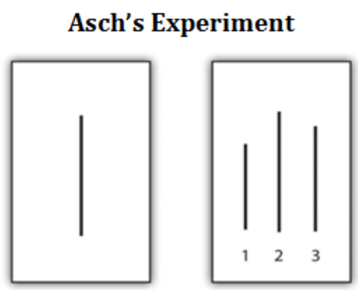
Although many students may believe that the democratic leadership is the best among other styles ever, it depends on the type and the purpose of the group. In the battle field, for example, long negotiations between the captain and the soldiers (i.e., democracy) may lead this group to a total annihilation. Likewise, if a kindergarten teacher let the children vote for what to eat for lunch, they may choose ice cream Monday through Friday, and this may lead them to terrible diarrhea.

Conformity

Psychologist Solomon Asch (1907–1996) conducted experiments that illustrated how great the pressure to conform is, specifically within a small group (1956). After reading about his work in the Sociological Research

feature, ask yourself what you would do in Asch's experiment. Would you speak up? What would help you speak up and what would discourage it?

Conformity Pressure



In 1951, psychologist Solomon Asch sat a small group of about eight people around a table. Only one of the people sitting there was the true subject; the rest were associates of the experimenter. However, the subject was led to believe that the others were all, like him, people brought in for an experiment in visual judgments.

The researcher shows two panels, one with a single vertical line, and the other with three vertical lines differing in length (as shown above), and asks: "Which of the three lines, 1, 2, or 3, is the closest in length to the line put on the left?"

The answer is easy--if we are by ourselves. When all other people make the same mistake, however, some of us (more than 1/3) follow that mistake, which we know is wrong, though. This is a social psychological phenomenon called **conformity pressure**.

Asch concluded that there are two main causes for conformity: people want to be liked by the group or they believe that the group is better informed than they are. He found his study results disturbing; they revealed that educated people tend to go along with a wrong answer (Asch 1956).

Assume that you are taking the subway train. At a given station, which is not your destination, almost all other passengers got off. What would you do?

Groupthink

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Functional aspects of "groups" tend to be more emphasized than their dysfunctional ones. Having learned Asch's experiment, however, we can restate the above, like: "Alone we can make so little *error*; together we can make so much." Social psychologists found that conformity can lead to such disastrous phenomenon as **groupthink**, a narrowing of thought by a group of people, leading to the perception that there is only one correct answer, and that to even suggest alternatives is a sign of disloyalty (Janis 1982).

Groupthink involves the aforementioned "in-group" loyalty and "out-group" antagonism, and its energy is maintained through emerging, and growing, ethnocentrism (the self-centered attitude on the group level). Things are discussed exclusively for the in-group advantage, and, very importantly, basic human rights on the personal level (both in in-group and in out-group) are totally undermined. Furthermore, out-group people are dehumanized, that is, they are viewed as non-humans. Totalitarianism and dictatorship (as opposed to democracy) are possible when groupthink dominates the society. Discussions supporting the governmental spying on ordinary people for the sake of "war on terrorism" form a clear example. The slogan of "America first" (rather than "people first") is another.

Once involved in "groupthink" deeply, even a nice person can engage in inhumane activities--let alone government officials or medical professionals. After 9/11, for example, U.S. government officials (and many Americans) justified torture of prisoners at Guantanamo, as moral. Thought narrowed so greatly that the U.S. Justice Department ruled that the United States was not bound by the Geneva Convention that prohibits torture (Lewis 2005). Even medical professionals, originally trained to help people, joined in. They advised the CIA interrogators, telling them when to stop waterboarding, slamming prisoners' heads into walls, or shackling a prisoner's arms to the ceiling—so there wouldn't be permanent damage" (Shane 2009). And, again, many Americans support this.

Perhaps the key to preventing groupthink is the widest possible circulation —especially among a nation's top government officials—of research by social scientists independent of the government and information that media reporters have gathered freely (Henslin 2014, p. 154). Giving free rein to

diverse opinions based on scientific research may reduce chances for groupthink to dominate the society, or world.

Summary

Primary groups rarely have formal leaders although there can be informal leadership. In secondary groups, there are two types of leadership functions, with expressive leaders focused on emotional health and wellness, and instrumental leaders more focused on results. Closely related to them, there are three different leadership styles: democratic leaders, laissez-faire leaders, and authoritarian leaders.

A number of experiments have illustrated how strong the drive to conform can be. It is worth considering real-life examples of how conformity pressure and group-think can lead people to ethically and morally suspect acts.

Further Research

What is your leadership style? The website http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Leadership offers a quiz to help you find out!

Explore other experiments on conformity at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Stanford-Prison

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Glossary

authoritarian leader
: a leader who issues orders and assigns tasks

conformity
: the extent to which an individual complies with group or societal norms

democratic leader
a leader who encourages group participation and consensus-building before moving into action

dyad
a two-member group

expressive leader
a leader who is concerned with process and with ensuring everyone's emotional wellbeing

instrumental leader
a leader who is goal oriented with a primary focus on accomplishing tasks

laissez-faire leader
a hands-off leader who allows members of the group to make their own decisions

leadership function
the main focus or goal of a leader

leadership style
the style a leader uses to achieve goals or elicit action from group members

triad
a three-member group

Formal Organizations

- Understand the different types of formal organizations
- Recognize the characteristics of bureaucracies
- Identify the concepts of the McJob and the McDonaldization of society

Our contemporary societies are dominated by large and impersonal secondary organizations. From schools to businesses to healthcare to government, these organizations, referred to as **formal organizations**, are indeed **bureaucracies**, those operated upon secure sets of rules that govern people, rather than the other way around.

Types of Formal Organizations

Girl Scout troops and correctional facilities are both formal organizations. (Photo (a) courtesy of moonlightbulb/flickr; Photo (b) courtesy of CxOxS/flickr)

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) posited that formal organizations fall into three categories. **Normative organizations**, also called voluntary organizations, are based on shared interests. As the name suggests, joining them is voluntary and typically done because people find membership rewarding in an intangible way. The Audubon Society and a ski club are

examples of normative organizations. **Coercive organizations** are groups that we must be coerced, or pushed, to join. These may include prison or a rehabilitation center. Symbolic interactionist Erving Goffman states that most coercive organizations are total institutions (1961). A total institution is one in which inmates or military soldiers live a controlled lifestyle and in which total resocialization takes place. The third type is **utilitarian organizations**, which, as the name suggests, are joined because of the need for a specific material reward. High school and the workplace fall into this category—one joined in pursuit of a diploma, the other in order to make money.

	Normative	**Coercive**	**Utilitarian**
Benefit of Membership	Intangible benefit	Corrective benefit	Tangible benefit
Type of Membership	Volunteer basis	Required	Contractual basis
Feeling of Connectedness	Shared affinity	No affinity	Some affinity

Three Categories of Formal OrganizationsCourtesy of Etzioni (1975)

Bureaucracies

Max Weber offered an **ideal type** of bureaucracies, describing such characteristics as: hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality (1968 [1922]). To make it sure, though, this "ideal" doesn't mean "best." It should be seen as a "pure" type, instead, through which to eliminate all noises in the reality (**contexts**) and to focus only on

essential aspects of the topic in discussion (**concepts**) (the difference between them will be discussed in Ch. 18, Work and Economy). So, although Weber's ideal type helps us understand the core principles of bureaucratic organizations (concepts), it can't be expected to explain, say, why so many sexual misconduct scandals can happen to so many high-ranked men, or anything like that (contexts).

Hierarchy of authority is one of the major principles of bureaucracy that places workers and offices vertically by their ranking of authority. Together with the next principle, division of labor, this helps clarify who is responsible to what. BMCC, our school, for example, is bureaucratically organized, at the top of which placed is the president. Below him/her, there are several departments, such as the natural science department, social science department, and so forth, at the top of each of which placed is the chairperson followed by the deputy chairs... Hence, things are organized in a chain of command shaped upon this hierarchy of authority.

The principle of **division of labor** divides the entire task of the organization into pieces, assigning each worker a specific role to play. Based on specialization of each role, this improves efficiency. For example, professors specialized in psychology teach psychology and nothing else, and they can't be expected, say, to process students' financial aid application, or to clean the bathrooms in the campus. Other than academic departments, there are several different offices in BMCC, such as the admissions office, registrar's office, office of human resources, and so forth, and workers in each office play their own specific roles and nothing else. The sum of all the roles played constitutes the entire task of this college, and that's what a "division of labor" is about.

The principle of **explicit rules** requires all rules that govern the organization to be written down and clearly shown to everybody. There should be no hidden rules. The syllabus of your sociology course is an example for this. In the end of each semester, some students ask, showing a full of tears in their eyes, "Professor, is there anything I can do to get a passing grade?" Sorry, but everything students need to know is printed in the syllabus, and there's no hidden rule. This principle helps maintain

equality for everybody in the same way. "Yo, you're leaving your eye-dropper bottle on my desk. Pick that up, okay?"

Finally, bureaucracies are also characterized by **impersonality**, which takes personal feelings out of professional situations. This principle protects organizations from various forms of corruption, such as nepotism, backroom deals, and other types of favoritism. Impersonality also requires that authority resides in the position or the office, and not in the person, and, on the other hand, that evaluation of a job reflects the quality of its performance, and not the person's race/ethnicity, gender, or the like. The professor, for example, is required to give a grade to his/her students as the professor, not as a friend to some particular students; likewise, the grade is expected to reflect students' performance only, not their personal qualities.

Criticisms of Bureaucracies

The bureaucratic arrangement for big organizations is thus functional in many ways, including clarification of responsibility, efficiency, fairness, and so on. On the other hand, however, there are several negatives. So-called **red tape** or "trained incapacity" is one of those. Bureaucrats are trained not to use their human sense but to follow rules in rigid manner. This can cause ridiculous situations. An ID card, for example, that shows one's date of birth may not be accepted just because it expired some time ago, although one's date of birth can't expire. Robert Merton (1957), hence, mockingly pointed out that adherence to the rules, originally conceived as means (or tool), becomes transformed into end (goal) in itself. That is, workers in big organizations tend to follow the rules *for the sake of the rules* rather than for the sake of the mission.

Related to the above, some critically observe that bureaucrats in general act like robots, each of which can be likened to "a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him/her an essentially fixed route of march" (Mills and Gerth, 2007 [1958], p. 228). In other words, this ever-moving mechanism--or bureaucracy--is controlling humans, not the other way around, the condition that is called **alienation**.

This McDonald’s storefront in Egypt shows the McDonaldization of society. (Photo courtesy of s_w_ellis/flickr)

McDonaldization

McDonaldization, a view offered by George Ritzer (1993), refers to the increasing presence of the fast food business model in common social institutions, as seen in 7-Eleven, Starbucks, Dunkin' Donuts, Pizza Hut, and, of course, McDonald's. Although it is based on Max Weber’s ideas about the rationalization based on the bureaucracy, Ritzer's focus is placed on increasing cultural *homogeneity* in our globalized world. The merits of this business model includes: efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control. At McDonald's, for example (Ritzer 2011, pp. 584-86):

- Efficiency: Burgers are assembled in an assembly-line fashion. The drive-through window is a highly efficient means for customers to obtain, and for employees to dole out, meals.
- Predictability: Customers can order, pay, and leave quickly.
- Calculability: Customers spend as little time as possible in the restaurant. The drive-through window reduces this time to zero.
- Control: Employees are clearly controlled by such technologies as french-fry machines that ring when the fries are done and even automatically lift the fries out of the hot oil.

Although having grown globally in our contemporary world as a good business model with a lot of merits, it should be also pointed out that McDonaldization is not free from demerit aspects, which Ritzer (ibid.) calls "irrationality of rationality." In order to lower the cost, for example, McDonald's serves its customers in a one-size-fits-all pattern, disregarding personal tastes of each customer. Similarly, through the fast job, customers cannot expect high-quality food. Moreover, in its automated business mechanism, in which not just employees but customers are also treated as its parts, person-to-person interactions cannot be expected. In short, Ritzer argues (ibid.), McDonaldization is a source of dehumanization and degradation for employees and customers alike. Keeping these in mind, compare giant fast-food chain restaurants with small neighborhood restaurants, such as that run by, say, David helped by his wife, Jane, and by his son, Andres...

Summary

Large organizations fall into three main categories: normative/voluntary, coercive, and utilitarian. We live in a time of contradiction: while the pace of change and technology are requiring people to be more nimble and less bureaucratic in their thinking, large bureaucracies like hospitals, schools, and governments are more hampered than ever by their organizational format. At the same time, the past few decades have seen the development of a trend to bureaucratize and conventionalize local institutions. Increasingly, Main Streets across the country resemble each other; instead of a Bob’s Coffee Shop and Jane’s Hair Salon there is a Dunkin Donuts and a Supercuts. This trend has been referred to as the McDonaldization of society.

Further Research

As mentioned above, the concept of McDonaldization is a growing one. The following link discusses this phenomenon further: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/McDonaldization

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Glossary

bureaucracies
: formal organizations characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality.

clear division of labor
: the fact that each individual in a bureaucracy has a specialized task to perform

coercive organizations
: organizations that people do not voluntarily join, such as prison or a mental hospital

explicit rules
: the types of rules in a bureaucracy; rules that are outlined, recorded, and standardized

formal organizations
: large, impersonal organizations

hierarchy of authority
: a clear chain of command found in a bureaucracy

impersonality
: the removal of personal feelings from a professional situation

Iron Rule of Oligarchy
: the theory that an organization is ruled by a few elites rather than through collaboration

McDonaldization of Society
: the increasing presence of the fast food business model in common social institutions

meritocracy
: a bureaucracy where membership and advancement is based on merit—proven and documented skills

normative or voluntary organizations

organizations that people join to pursue shared interests or because they provide some intangible rewards

total institution
: an organization in which participants live a controlled lifestyle and in which total resocialization occurs

utilitarian organizations
: organizations that are joined to fill a specific material need

Introduction to Race and Ethnicity

class="introduction"

Do you think race played a role in Trayvon Martin’s death or in the public reaction to it? Do you think race had any influence on the initial decision not to arrest George Zimmerman, or on his later acquittal? (Photo courtesy of Ryan Vaarsi/flickr)

Trayvon Martin was a seventeen-year-old black teenager. On the evening of February 26, 2012, he was visiting with his father and his father’s fiancée in the Sanford, Florida multi-ethnic gated community where his father's fiancée lived. Trayvon left her home on foot to buy a snack from a nearby convenience store. As he was returning, George Zimmerman, a white Hispanic male and the community’s neighborhood watch program coordinator, noticed him. In light of a recent rash of break-ins, Zimmerman called the police to report a person acting suspiciously, which he had done on many other occasions. The 911 operator told Zimmerman not to follow the teen, but soon after Zimmerman and Trayvon had a physical confrontation. According to Zimmerman, Trayvon attacked him, and in the ensuing scuffle Trayvon was shot and killed (CNN Library 2014).

A public outcry followed Martin’s death. There were allegations of **racial profiling**—the use by law enforcement of race alone to determine whether to stop and detain someone—a national discussion about “Stand Your Ground Laws,” and a failed lawsuit in which Zimmerman accused NBC of airing an edited version of the 911 call that made him appear racist. Zimmerman was not arrested until April 11, when he was charged with second-degree murder by special prosecutor Angela Corey. In the ensuing trial, he was found not guilty (CNN Library 2014).

The shooting, the public response, and the trial that followed offer a snapshot of the sociology of race. Do you think race played a role in

Martin’s death or in the public reaction to it? Do you think race had any influence on the initial decision not to arrest Zimmerman, or on his later acquittal? Does society fear black men, leading to racial profiling at an institutional level? What about the role of the media? Was there a deliberate attempt to manipulate public opinion? If you were a member of the jury, would you have convicted George Zimmerman?

Glossary

racial profiling
: the use by law enforcement of race alone to determine whether to stop and detain someone

Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

- Understand the difference between race and ethnicity
- Define a majority group (dominant group)
- Define a minority group (subordinate group)

Studying race is difficult. Although **race** is about our biological traits, such as skin color and the shape of eyes, the social reality related to race, which is the main focus of sociological studies of race, stems NOT from our biological traits, BUT from socially constructed images and meanings attached to our biological traits as symbols. Recall that our behaviors and attitudes are shaped by our social conditions and locations including race and ethnicity, not by our biological traits or DNA.

Unlike race, ethnicity is sociologically more straightforward. **Ethnicity** is about culture, such as customs, values, and norms. These are themselves the social reality.

The United States is the nation that has been built by generations of immigrants--except Native Americans. President John F. Kennedy, for example, was the third generation of an Irish immigrant family, and President Donald Trump is also the third generation of a mixture of German and Scotch immigrants.

Of curse, most immigrants are not as successful as JFK or DT. Chances are, quite the contrary, many of them face hardships as minorities in bitter race and ethnic issues. To be noted, though, such issues in the U.S. do not popup in a vacuum. They have history based upon **immigration** behind them, very cacophonous history that helps us better understand the meanings of such issues.

The term **minorities** indicates subordinate people who have less power than the majority. Yes, it is power--social, economic, and political--that distinguishes between minorities and the majority, not the size in number. In South Africa, for example, the number of whits is smaller than that of blacks, but as whites have way more power than blacks, they are considered the majority and blacks, minorities.

What Is Race?

Social science organizations in the U.S. including the American Association of Anthropologists, the American Sociological Association, and the American Psychological Association have all taken an official position rejecting the biological explanations of race. Over time, the typology of race that developed during early racial science has fallen into disuse, and the **social construction of race** is a more sociological way of understanding racial categories. Today's social scientists suggest that race is not biologically identifiable and that previous racial categories, not based upon scientific data, erroneously supported racial prejudice (Omi and Winant 1994; Graves 2003).

The social construction of race is also reflected in the way names for racial categories change with changing times. It's worth noting that race, in this sense, is also a system of labeling that provides a source of identity; specific labels fall in and out of favor during different social eras. For example, the category "negroid," popular in the nineteenth century, evolved into the term "negro" by the 1960s, and then this term fell from use and was replaced with "black" that was soon replaced, again, by "African American." The name is not an objective fact but a subjective idea that can change, and, hence, the racial reality is the social reality.

Since 1960, the Native American population has exhibited explosive growth, increasing from 552,000 to 1,959,000, or 255% (Passel 1996, p. 79). This is demographically impossible without immigration, immigration which is nonetheless normally irrelevant to Native Americans. What happened is that the racial categories handled in the U.S. Census is based solely on self-identification. Until the 1960 Census, most of them with partial or distant Native American ancestry identified as "white" or "Hispanic"; however, after that, many of them, having been aroused by the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s (which will be discussed later), began proudly identifying as "Native American." Identification is, of course, not an objective fact but a subjective idea that can change, and, again, the racial reality is the social reality.

What Is Ethnicity?

Ethnicity is a term that describes groups of people who share history and culture including customs, values, and norms. Within a racial category, there are several different ethnic groups. If race is likened to a nation (e.g., the U.S.), then, ethnicity is to its states or prefectures (California, New York, and so forth). For example, a racial category "white" includes British, German, French, and so forth. "Asian" includes Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and so forth. "Hispanic" includes Mexican, Dominican, Peruvian, and so forth.

"Black," however, is complicated and difficult; if that is about "African American" (the descendants of forced migrants for slavery), their ethnic origins related to "culture" are hardly traceable, but if that is "African," it's easy to show its "prefectures," such as Nigerian, Ghanaian, Kenyan, and so forth. Immigrants from these countries do not share the African American history and legacy, such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, the blues, jazz, and so forth. Barack Obama, whose father is Kenyan and whose mother is white, for example, is not African American--although the *socially constructed* image of him identifies him to be so, erroneously.

New York is very much privileged. Owing to a variety of ethnic groups living in the city, we enjoy a variety of ethnic food. Today, for example, fast food restaurants serve Chinese lo mien, Indian curry, Mexican taco, Colombian empanadas, Japanese sushi, Italian pizza, Frankfurt sausage, French fries, Turkish kebab, Korean BBQ, Russian stroganoff, you name it...

Immigration Cacophonies

When we talk about race/ethnicity in terms of social reality going on in the U.S., we must not forget to talk about **immigration** and its very much cacophonous history. The first mass immigration to the U.S. took place in the first half of the nineteenth century (Jones 1992). The wave was comprised of 5 million Europeans (mostly Irish, Germans, and so forth) called the "old immigrants," and its size was greater in number than the entire population of the U.S. at that time. Behind this stood was the great social changes resulting from the Industrial Revolution, for which farmers

were losing their means of livelihood in their homelands. Atlantic crossing became faster and cheaper, thanks to the invention of the steam engine.

Native-born Americans' attitudes toward immigrants have been ambiguous (Gordon 1964), and remain to be so, still today. Immigrants were, on the one hand, desired to swell the population and importance of states and territories, to man the farms of expanding prairie settlement, to work the mines, and to build the railroads and canals. Immigrants were especially convenient for capitalists to set the wages at the low level. Native-born Americans, placed at the bottom of the society, faced the situation in which they had to compete with immigrants over unskilled jobs. This remains the same today.

Culturally, on the other hand, many Americans began worrying about the fact that immigrants were bringing with them not just labor power but disturbingly their own religions, languages, and ways of conduct into the U.S. These Americans, Protestants by definition, heavily discriminated against the Irish as they were Catholics. The **Naturalization Act of 1790** defined the American as "white," meaning non-white immigrants could not apply for the U.S. citizenship. Based on this, these Americans defined the Irish as "black," arguing that they shouldn't be allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship.

In the middle of the nineteenth century came Chinese immigrants via Hawaiian sugar plantations, as cheap, and even disposable, laborers. They worked for the mining industry and transcontinantal railroads, and many died for explosions for tunneling. They were unassimilable, even more so than the old immigrants. Throughout the 1850’s and 1860’s the Chinese in California were subjected to sporadic outburst of mob violence (Jones 1992). Chinatown, their ethnic enclave, was not just a haven but a bulwark for them to run into, when chased by roughnecks.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the main body of U.S. immigrants, which had been western Europeans, shifted toward eastern and southern Europeans (Jews, Italians, and so forth) called the "new immigrants." Italians had to move because the great social changes devastated their farming environments, especially the citrus and wine industries. Jews had to move for the pogroms, i.e., the deliberate

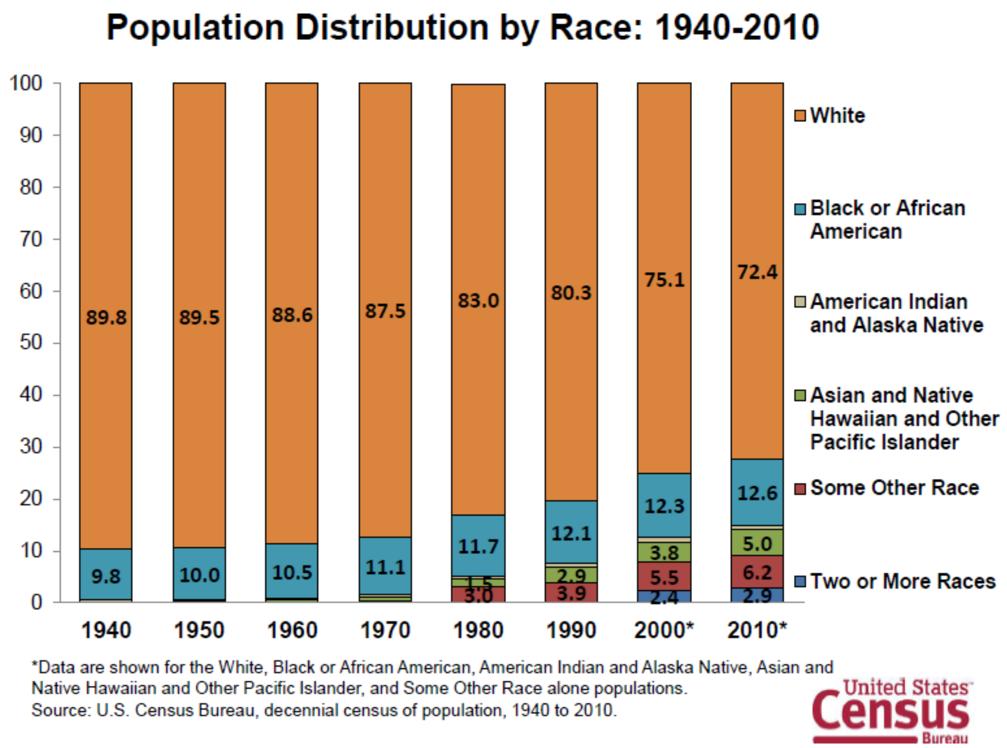
persecution of Jews condoned by the Russian government. Just as the Irish were identified as blacks, as mentioned above, Italians were considered non-white Hispanics. In the early 1890's, a wave of nativist violence targeted the new immigrants (Jones 1992). Antisemitism increased markedly, and the membership of Ku Klux Klan reached some two and a half million by 1923.

The anti-immigrant sentiments grew further and eventually led to the **Immigration Act of 1924**. This law allotted quotas to the various countries for immigration to the U.S. There would be 2% quotas based upon 1890 census, a change designed to reduce still further the proportion of southern and eastern European entries. Countries of Western Hemisphere, including Canada and Mexico, were exempted from the quota system. Chances of most Asians, such as the Chinese and the Japanese, for immigration were in reality uprooted.

Right after World War II, so-called war brides, mostly Japanese women who married American soldiers stationed in Japan, reopened the door to the U.S. immigration for non-whites. For them and their husbands, the War Brides Act of 1945 was enacted, allowing American military personnel to bring their foreign wives (Min 2006). Regarding the Naturalization Act of 1790 that defined the American as "white," however, the question arose: Can't the wife of an American become an American? To solve this problem, the **Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952**, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act, was passed, eliminating race as a bar to immigration and giving preferences to relatives. Now, thanks to the war brides, immigrants no longer have to be white in order to apply for U.S. citizenship.

As the quota system set in the Immigration Act of 1924 was sill intact, however, other than the war brides, the door of the U.S. immigration didn't open fully yet. It was the **Immigration Act of 1965** that finally removed the quota system and opened up the door fully for non-whites. It was entirely unexpected that the Act would shift the main body of the U.S. immigrants from Europeans to Asians and Latinos. The United States, since then, is no longer a country of whites. Having observed the effects of the Act becoming clearer and clearer by the 1990s (see the image below),

President Bill Clinton stated in his speech delivered to Americans:"We will all be minorities." In New York City, the situation is more extreme; between the years 2000 and 2010, 44.6% of the population is white, 27.5% is Hispanics of any race (which overlaps white), 25.1% is black, and 11.8% is Asians (World Population Review 2018).



What Is Minority?

Sociologist Louis Wirth (1945) defined a **minority group** as “any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.” The term **minority** connotes subordination and the term the **majority**, domination. The difference between them, again, lies in “power”--economic, social, and political--not in size in number. So President Bill Clinton, just like many others, erroneously used the term “minorities” (see above) although his intention to call for welcoming the new diverse era was nice.

Courtesy of flickr.com

Native Americans became minority in their homeland. Why? The answer is easy: the difference in "power" between the invaders from Europe and the native Americans. At a glance, the image above looks funny. A closer attention to the meaning of the message "fighting terrorism since 1492," however, may make us notice the very tragic history of the Native Americans and the cacophonous history of the U.S. By the way, who is the terrorist in this message?

According to Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris (1958), a minority group is distinguished by five characteristics: (1) unequal treatment and less power over their lives, (2) distinguishing physical or cultural traits like skin color or language, (3) involuntary membership in the group, (4) awareness of subordination, and (5) high rate of in-group marriage. Hey, let's look around ourselves! Most people in New York share these characteristics, don’t they?

Dollard’s Frustration-Aggression theory (1939) suggested that the members of the majority tend to displace its unfocused aggression onto minorities. In order to mitigate their frustrated feelings, they blame minorities for social, economic, or political problems, for which minorities are not responsible. This social-psychological phenomenon is called **scapegoat**.

For example, the Nazi Germany blamed Jews for the economic disaster, a result of the defeat of Germany in World War I, for which Jews could not be responsible. Nonetheless, many Germans fervently supported the Nazi party, and entirely entrusted the political power to the party. Recall that

when people get an out-group or share an enemy group, they place themselves in in-group, within which solidarity can be heightened, often to a dangerous level. In 2016, one of the U.S. presidential candidates utilized this social-psychological phenomenon, placing Muslims and Latinos in out-group, and won the election!

Summary

Race is fundamentally a social construct. Ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture and national origin. Minority groups are defined by their lack of power.

Further Research

Explore aspects of race and ethnicity at PBS's site, "What Is Race?": http://openstaxcollege.org/l/PBS_what_is_race

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Glossary

dominant group
: a group of people who have more power in a society than any of the subordinate groups

ethnicity

shared culture, which may include heritage, language, religion, and more

minority group
: any group of people who are singled out from the others for differential and unequal treatment

scapegoat theory
: a theory that suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group

social construction of race
: the school of thought that race is not biologically identifiable

subordinate group
: a group of people who have less power than the dominant group

Stereotype, Prejudice, and Discrimination

- Explain the difference between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and racism
- Identify different types of discrimination
- View racial tension through a sociological lens

A **stereotype** is an “oversimplified generalization” of a certain category of people, category that can be any type, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, and so forth. It’s oversimplified, which means a stereotype can be true, to some extent. For example, some people believe that Asians are bad drivers. Yes, some Asians are bad drivers, but if you generalize this belief to all Asians, some of them would get mad and yelp, “Excuse us!”

Prejudice is a “biased attitude” toward a certain category of people. It’s biased, and therefore can’t be true. It's very important to note that prejudice is not based on our own experience or empirical knowledge; rather, we learn it from other people around us, including our parents. People can have prejudice against a group that they never met, or even a group that doesn’t exist. Below is an example that actually happened.

A sociology professor uses a sports gym. One day, in the shower room, a guy talked to him, saying, “You know what? Jews are increasing in this gym.” The professor asked, “How do you know who the Jews are?” He replied, “Smell.” “Smell?” “Yes, smell! Don’t you sense that bad smell unique to the Jews?” The thing is, this professor is a Jew.

Unlike stereotype and prejudice, both of which are attitudes (thinking), **discrimination** is behavior (acting). It is an unfair treatment of, or unfair action taken against, a certain category of people. But what is “unfair”? For the same performance, if other students got an A, but you got a C, that's unfair. If other students got 93 points for the final and got an A, and if you got 73 points for that and got a C, that's not unfair, at all, though.

Although discrimination is often based on prejudice, it can happen without prejudice. Likewise, prejudice does not necessarily lead to discrimination.

This means that one can happen without the other. An example of discrimination with no prejudice is this.

Assume you run a restaurant in California during World War II. Your neighbors share strong prejudice against Japanese immigrants, the enemy people, while you have no prejudice against them. Now, some Japanese come in to your restaurant and ask you if there is a table for them to have dinner. In your restaurant, some neighbors were having dinner, but stopped it, and now they are staring at the Japanese with obvious hatred. Would you let the Japanese in, or in order to protect your business, would you refuse them?

An example of prejudice that doesn't lead to discrimination is easier. Some professors may have prejudice against some certain categories of students, in reality, but almost none of them discriminates against their students. Why? That's because if they did, and if what they did were judged by the department to be discrimination against their students, they would be officially penalized, possibly losing their job. Hence, it's very important to eliminate room for discrimination through institutional efforts. Personal efforts are important, but if a given problem is deeply embedded in the society, they would barely work.

Discrimination can be grouped into two types: individual discrimination and institutional discrimination. **Individual discrimination** happens, if ever, on the personal level in everyday situation. Here is an example. There is a public bathroom for each gender inside the subway station, 86th street, on the 2nd Avenue line, in Manhattan, which can be seen from outside the MetroCard turnstile. If an MTA employee in the booth lets a person use the bathroom without swiping his/her MetroCard, but if the same employee says to you, although you're not taking the subway, "Bathroom? Swipe your MetroCard," that's individual discrimination. Although this discrimination is personal, room for this should be eliminated by structural efforts, i.e., by formal punishments.

Institutional discrimination, by contrast, involves the entire institution, such as schools, banks, realtors, and so forth. It happens structurally, not by chance. For example, earlier studies using national samples (Thomas 1991) showed that bankers were more likely to reject the loan applications of

minorities. When bankers defended themselves by saying that whites had better credit history, researchers retested their data. They found that even when applicants had identical credit, African Americans and Latinos were 60% more likely to be rejected. This bad behavior is institutionalized in the entire institution, and it is not personal. Of course, formal punishments should be used to eliminate room for this, as well.

Bye Bye "One-Drop Rule," Hello "Multiple Identities"

Golfer Tiger Woods has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage. Individuals with multiple ethnic backgrounds are becoming more common.

(Photo courtesy of familymwr/flickr)

In the antebellum era (i.e., before the Civil War), while the sexual subordination of slaves resulted in children of mixed race called "amalgamation," based on the so-called "one-drop rule," these children were considered black and, therefore, treated as slaves.

Here is an example of the "one-drop rule," which would help us peep in the ridiculous aspect of the social reality related to race. In 1977, Susie Phipps, who believed she was white, applied for a passport and discovered that her Louisiana birth certificate listed her as “colored” (Moran 2001). Outraged, she insisted that “I was brought up white, I married white twice.” She challenged the bureau’s record. But the Louisiana courts refused to designate Phipps as white when the bureau introduced genealogical records showing that her great-great-great-great-grand mother was a slave.

In recent decades, the removal of miscegenation laws, which banned interracial sex and marriage, and a trend toward "diversity" have gradually made the image of racial exogamy (marriage outside of one's group) more acceptable than before. It is now common for the children of racially mixed parents to acknowledge and celebrate their various ethnic identities. Golfer Tiger Woods, for example, has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage; he jokingly refers to his ethnicity as “Cablinasian,” a term he coined to combine several of his ethnic backgrounds. This trend seems, however, rarely straightforward. The media, indeed, still identify him, just like Barack Obama, as African American, erroneously, and the society accepts it.

Summary

Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Prejudice refers to thoughts and feelings, while discrimination refers to actions. Racism refers to the belief that one race is inherently superior or inferior to other races.

Further Research

How far should First Amendment rights extend? Read more about the subject at the First Amendment Center: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/first_amendment_center

Learn more about institutional racism at www.splcenter.org

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Glossary

colorism
: the belief that one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group

discrimination
: prejudiced action against a group of people

institutional racism
: racism embedded in social institutions

prejudice
: biased thought based on flawed assumptions about a group of people

racial steering

the act of real estate agents directing prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race

racism
: a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others

redlining
: the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and business located in predominately minority communities

sedimentation of racial inequality
: the intergenerational impact of de facto and de jure racism that limits the abilities of black people to accumulate wealth

stereotypes
: oversimplified ideas about groups of people

white privilege
: the benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group

Theories of Race and Ethnicity

- Describe how major sociological perspectives view race and ethnicity
- Identify examples of culture of prejudice

Theoretical Perspectives

We can examine issues of race and ethnicity through three major sociological perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. As you read through these theories, ask yourself which one makes the most sense and why. Do we need more than one theory to explain racism, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination?

Functionalism

In the view of functionalism, racial and ethnic inequalities must have served an important function in order to exist as long as they have. This concept, of course, is problematic. How can racism and discrimination contribute positively to society? A functionalist might look at "functions" and "dysfunctions" caused by racial inequality. Nash (1964) focused his argument on the way racism is functional for the dominant group, for example, suggesting that racism morally justifies a racially unequal society. Consider the way slave owners justified slavery in the antebellum South, by suggesting black people were fundamentally inferior to white and preferred slavery to freedom.

Another way to apply the functionalist perspective to racism is to discuss the way racism can contribute positively to the functioning of society by strengthening bonds between in-groups members through the ostracism of out-group members. Consider how a community might increase solidarity by refusing to allow outsiders access. On the other hand, Rose (1951) suggested that dysfunctions associated with racism include the failure to take advantage of talent in the subjugated group, and that society must divert from other purposes the time and effort needed to maintain artificially constructed racial boundaries. Consider how much money, time,

and effort went toward maintaining separate and unequal educational systems prior to the civil rights movement.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity. A conflict theory perspective of U.S. history would examine the numerous past and current struggles between the white ruling class and racial and ethnic minorities, noting specific conflicts that have arisen when the dominant group perceived a threat from the minority group. In the late nineteenth century, the rising power of black Americans after the Civil War resulted in draconian Jim Crow laws that severely limited black political and social power. For example, Vivien Thomas (1910–1985), the black surgical technician who helped develop the groundbreaking surgical technique that saves the lives of “blue babies” was classified as a janitor for many years, and paid as such, despite the fact that he was conducting complicated surgical experiments. The years since the Civil War have showed a pattern of attempted disenfranchisement, with gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts aimed at predominantly minority neighborhoods.

Feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) developed **intersection theory**, which suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes. When we examine race and how it can bring us both advantages and disadvantages, it is important to acknowledge that the way we experience race is shaped, for example, by our gender and class. Multiple layers of disadvantage intersect to create the way we experience race. For example, if we want to understand prejudice, we must understand that the prejudice focused on a white woman because of her gender is very different from the layered prejudice focused on a poor Asian woman, who is affected by stereotypes related to being poor, being a woman, and her ethnic status.

Interactionism

For symbolic interactionists, race and ethnicity provide strong symbols as sources of identity. In fact, some interactionists propose that the symbols of race, not race itself, are what lead to racism. Famed Interactionist Herbert Blumer (1958) suggested that racial prejudice is formed through interactions between members of the dominant group: Without these interactions, individuals in the dominant group would not hold racist views. These interactions contribute to an abstract picture of the subordinate group that allows the dominant group to support its view of the subordinate group, and thus maintains the status quo. An example of this might be an individual whose beliefs about a particular group are based on images conveyed in popular media, and those are unquestionably believed because the individual has never personally met a member of that group. Another way to apply the interactionist perspective is to look at how people define their races and the race of others. As we discussed in relation to the social construction of race, since some people who claim a white identity have a greater amount of skin pigmentation than some people who claim a black identity, how did they come to define themselves as black or white?

Summary

Functionalist views of race study the role dominant and subordinate groups play to create a stable social structure. Conflict theorists examine power disparities and struggles between various racial and ethnic groups. Interactionists see race and ethnicity as important sources of individual identity and social symbolism. The concept of culture of prejudice recognizes that all people are subject to stereotypes that are ingrained in their culture.

Further Research

Do you know someone who practices white privilege? Do you practice it? Explore the concept with this checklist: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/white_privilege_checklist to see how much of it holds true for you or others.

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Glossary

culture of prejudice
: the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture

intersection theory
: theory that suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes

Intergroup Relationships

- Explain different intergroup relations in terms of their relative levels of tolerance
- Give historical and/or contemporary examples of each type of intergroup relation

Intergroup relations (relationships between different groups of people) range along a spectrum between loyalty (in-group) and hatred (out-group). In the following sections discussed are: genocide, expulsion, segregation, cultural pluralism, assimilation, the melting pot, and amalgamation.

Of these, the first three practices are illegal today although informal segregation, which is seriously problematic, still takes place. Many people do not clearly understand the meanings of, and the differences among, the last four. For example, which one do you think is the closest to the idea of diversity? No, no, the answer is not "the melting pot." You'll see the answer to this question below. But start from the discussions about genocide, first.

Genocide

Genocide is the deliberate annihilation (killing) of a targeted minority. The term has two parts, geno and cide. Geno means all and cide, killing--just like, infanticide (baby killing), homicide (human killing), pesticide (insect killing), and so forth. When sociologists use the term genocide, however, it doesn't literally mean "all killing," but it's about actions systematically taken to kill a large number of people belonging to a certain minority group.

Possibly the most well-known case of genocide is Hitler’s attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in the first part of the twentieth century. Also known as the Holocaust, the explicit goal of Hitler’s “Final Solution” was the eradication of European Jewry, as well as the destruction of other minority groups such as Catholics, people with disabilities, and homosexuals. With forced emigration, concentration camps, and mass executions in gas chambers, Hitler’s Nazi regime was responsible for the deaths of 12 million people, 6 million of whom were Jewish.

Another example is what happened to Native Americans in the past. Some historians estimate that their populations dwindled from approximately 12 million in the year 1500 to barely 237,000 by the year 1900 (Lewy 2004), a decrease by 98% (!). In 1830 Congress passed an Indian Removal Act that empowered President Andrew Jackson to expel Native Americans east of the Mississippi (Steinberg 1981, p. 17) in order to expand the southern slave plantations. In 1838, some 12,000 Cherokee were forced on a cold winter to march to the west (about 2,200 miles away). As estimated 2,500 died during the trail, and another 1,500 died on what the Cherokee called the "Trail of Tears." Most of the deaths were caused by smallpox they were not immune to, smallpox that was *for some reason* attached to blankets given to them as “gifts” by the U.S. government.

Genocide is by no means a historical event having happened only in the past; it is still happening today (Business Insider 2017). See below, for example.

- Unlike the majority of the Buddhist country, the Rohingya are Muslim, and have long suffered as second-class citizens in Myanmar because most people in the country believe they are illegal immigrants and "terrorists" from Bangladesh. So far, up to 3,000 people have been killed in Myanmar, and at least 270,000 have been displaced.
- South Sudan became the world's newest country in 2011, but since 2013, the country has been mired in a brutal civil war. South Sudan's President Salva Kiir, a member of the Dinka ethnic group, has been using his army to wage a campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing against the Dinka's main rival ethnic group, the Nuer, as well as other smaller local groups.
- In brutal, genocidal campaigns in Syria and Iraq, ISIS sought to systematically exterminate Yazidis, Shiites, and Christians and destroy their villages. They also carried out mass rapes in these communities. Although numbers remain hazy, thousands of people have been killed in these related genocides.
- The Central African Republic, an African country wedged mainly between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Chad, has been embroiled in a civil war ever since 2013 when the

country's Christian President François Bozizé was overthrown by a coalition of Muslim groups.
- In the mid-2000s, Darfur in Sudan was recognized as the first genocide of the 21st century by international observers. The ethnic killings began in 2003 when ethnically Arab militias supported by Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir began massacring non-Arab people and destroying their villages. The main victims of these campaigns have been the Fur people, but other small non-Arab groups were also affected.

Expulsion

Expulsion is an action taken by the majority to kick out a certain minority group from a certain area. In some cases, such as the Trail of Tears and the Holocaust discussed above, expulsion can lead to genocide, but they are not necessarily intertwined. Either way, this action would be impossible to be taken without the overwhelming power of the majority over minorities. Right after the Japanese government’s attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order to authorize the expulsion of anyone with one-eighth Japanese ancestry (i.e., one great-grandparent who was Japanese) or more--including offspring of white American parents--from their home states. Their personal properties were confiscated entirely. Over 120,000 legal Japanese residents and even Japanese U.S. citizens, many of them children, were held in interment camps for up to four years. In the 1990s, the U.S. executive branch issued a formal apology for this expulsion; reparation efforts continue today.

Segregation

Segregation refers to the physical separation of minorities from the majority, in residence, workplace, school, and so forth. It can be either formal (*de jure*) or informal (*de facto*). In the U.S., for example, right after the Civil War, which abolished slavery, the so-called Jim Crow laws were enacted in order to *formerly* segregate emancipated ex-slaves. The laws mandated "separate but equal" policies and established two sections, "for

white" and "for colored," in public facilities, such as schools, public bathrooms, trains and buses, restaurants, and so forth.

In the “Jim Crow” South, it was legal to have “separate but equal” facilities for colored (black) and white. (Photo courtesy of Allen B. West)

Numbers of lawsuits were filed against the laws ever since. After a series of long struggles, the U.S. Supreme Court finally ruled in *Brown v Board of Education* of 1954 that "separate but equal" has no place in education because it violates the 14th amendment and is unconstitutional. Not only did this ruling end *de jure* segregation, but it further ignited the energy leading to the Civil Rights Movement that would bear fruit just ten years later.

Informally, however, people are still segregated, mostly by their social class, which tends to be related to their race. Middle class people, indeed, live in middle-class neighborhoods and lower class people, in lower-class neighborhoods. This itself is not a problem, constitutionally. As a result, however, this residential segregation, by social class as well as by race, leads to other forms of segregation. The quality of schools in poor neighborhoods, whose budgets can't be great, for example, tend to be poorer than those in rich areas. This can affect children's social class in adult to a

great extent. In terms of healthcare as well--as will be seen in Ch. 20, Health and Medicide--research indicates that white men live longer than black men, presumably because of the difference in the quality of healthcare available to them in their neighborhoods. *De facto* segregation is hence a serious issue, but nonetheless there seems to be no effort made by the government to deal with this.

Cultural Pluralism

When the Anglo assimilation model, which forced all immigrants to follow the same Anglo Saxon's way of social conduct including the language, norms, and values, was predominant, German-born philosopher Horace Kallen offered the idea of **cultural pluralism** (1915), basically the same as what we call today multiculturalism or diversity (ta-dah, here is the answer to the question asked above!). He likened the Anglo model to "unison" and pluralism, to "harmony." That is, the Anglo model requires everybody to sing the same old Anglo-Saxon theme “America," in the same way, while pluralism allows people to sing their own parts that would result in harmony. Today, his idea is named a “salad bowl”: a great mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the flavor of the whole. It's based on mutual respect among minorities, on the one hand, and between minorities and the majority, on the other hand. In reality, however, true pluralism is a difficult goal to reach. In the U.S., indeed, the mutual respect is often missing, and cultural differences aren’t embraced as much as despised.

Assimilation

Assimilation, or Anglo assimilation, refers to processes that generate homogeneity beyond the ethnic group level (Kazal 1995, p. 286), homogeneity which centers around the majority, quite the opposite of cultural pluralism. It is the process through which minorities are ultimately becoming the same as the members of the majority, in various terms including the first name, the language, dietary habit, the knowledge about celebrities, and so forth. In terms of the first name, for example, the most

popular name of Asian boys in New York City today is Ethan and that of Asian girls, Sophia (Data.gov 2011).

Assimilation is not an easy process for minorities to follow, involving three major steps: willingness, ability, and acceptance. The process asks three questions related to these steps.

1. Are you willing to become the same as the members of the majority?
2. Are you able to do so?
3. Do you believe you'll be accepted by the majority as one of its members?

To the first question, cultural pluralists would answer "No," and that would be it. Even if people answer "Yes" to the first two questions, though, many of them would stumble in reality on the third, i.e., acceptance. Below is the discussions related to the third question here. Assimilation theorist Milton Gordon (1964) observes that:

> Many of them [the second generation immigrants] believed they heard the siren call of welcome to... America... But... the doors of the fraternity house, the city men’s club, and the country club were slammed in the face of the immigrant’s offspring... That invitation wasn’t really there... it was... a ‘look me over but don’t touch me’ invitation to [them]. (Gordon 1964, pp. 111-112)

For many immigrants to the United States, the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom and a new life. Unfortunately, they often encounter prejudice and discrimination. (Photo courtesy of Mark Heard/flickr)

The Melting Pot

The term **melting pot** comes from the famous play written by English Jew, Israel Zangwill, performed in the beginning of the twentieth century. The story is somewhat similar to that of *Romeo and Juliet*, a love story of the youth who suffer from an ongoing feud between their parents. *The Melting-Pot* is also a love story of a Jewish immigrant named David, whose family members had been killed in the pogroms (genocide condoned by the

Russian government), and a Russian Christian immigrant named Vera, whose father was the government officer responsible for the killing of David's family. Vera's father admits his guilt, but David forgives him, understanding that ethnic divisions and hatred are socially constructed and are not personal. Believing that "America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races... are melting and reforming” (cited in Sollors 1986, p. 66), David proclaims:

> DAVID: There she [America] lies, the great Melting Pot--listen! Can't you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth [He points east]--the harbor where a thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and a seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian--black and yellow...
> VERA: Jew and Gentile...
> DAVID: Yes, East and West, and North and South... How the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God. Ah, Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem where all nations and races come to worship and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labor and look forward...

Many scholars are more or less cynical about this melting-pot *dream* of the mixture of all races becoming into a totally new one. Even Werner Sollors, who supports the dream, clearly states that "the melting-pot idea is... based upon the belief in American ideals--rather than upon empirically observed reality" (1986, p. 70). Also, Milton Gordon (1964, p. 129) suggests that “the ‘single melting pot’ vision of America has been something of an illusion,” and the reality should be seen, at best, as the "multiple melting pot." Even more clearly, Glazer and Moynihan (1970) assert that the "point about the melting pot... is that it did not happen. At least not in New York."

Amalgamation

The term **amalgamation** is another word for "mixture," but its sociological meaning is somewhat ambiguous. It can be the merger between different "cultures," or it can be interbreeding or miscegenation between different

"races," or both. If only cultures are mixed with no miscegenation, centering around the majority, it can be seen as the product of the assimilation model. If both are involved, it can be seen as the product of the melting pot, in which people are mixed culturally and racially. If only miscegenation takes place without cultural amalgamation, it can be included in cultural pluralism. Actually, this can be observed among interracial marriages that involve the first generation of non-Western immigrants, such as Japanese. Again, the term amalgamation is ambiguous, just like the reality itself. One thing clear, though, is that without amalgamation, there would be no melting pot.

A Summary of the Assimilation/Non-Assimilation Models

William Norman (1973) succinctly displays the differences among the assimilation/non-assimilation models discussed above in very simple formulas. Which one do you think is the closest to the reality going on around ourselves? As the reality is not only so complicated but is also changing all the time, there may be no clear and fixed answer to this. But just take a look at the formulas below and think about what they are telling us.

- Cultural Pluralism: A + B + C = A + B + C, where each maintains its original culture and identity.
- Assimilation: A + B + C = A, where A is the majority, and all races are becoming like A.
- The Melting Pot (Amalgamation): A + B + C = D, where D is a new race emerging as a result of the mixture of all races.

Summary

Intergroup relations range from a tolerant approach of pluralism to intolerance as severe as genocide. In cultural pluralism, groups retain their own identity. In assimilation, groups conform to the identity of the dominant group. In the melting pot, groups combine to form a new group identity. In amalgamation, culture, or blood, or both are mixed together.

Further Research

So you think you know your own assumptions? Check and find out with the Implicit Association Test: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/implicit_association_test

What do you know about the treatment of Australia's aboriginal population? Find out more by viewing the feature-length documentary *Our Generation*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tcq4oGL0wlI

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Glossary

amalgamation
: the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group

assimilation
: the process by which a minority individual or group takes on the characteristics of the dominant culture

expulsion
: the act of a dominant group forcing a subordinate group to leave a certain area or even the country

genocide
: the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group

pluralism
: the ideal of the United States as a "salad bowl:" a mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the

"flavor" of the whole

segregation
the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

- Compare and contrast the different experiences of various ethnic groups in the United States
- Apply theories of intergroup relations, race, and ethnicity to different subordinate groups

When colonists came to the New World, they found a land that did not need “discovering” since it was already occupied. While the first wave of immigrants came from Western Europe, eventually the bulk of people entering North America were from Northern Europe, then Eastern Europe, then Latin America and Asia. And let us not forget the forced immigration of African slaves. Most of these groups underwent a period of disenfranchisement in which they were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy before they managed (for those who could) to achieve social mobility. Today, our society is multicultural, although the extent to which this multiculturality is embraced varies, and the many manifestations of multiculturalism carry significant political repercussions. The sections below will describe how several groups became part of U.S. society, discuss the history of intergroup relations for each faction, and assess each group’s status today.

Native Americans

The only nonimmigrant ethnic group in the United States, Native Americans once numbered in the millions but by 2010 made up only 0.9 percent of U.S. populace; see above (U.S. Census 2010). Currently, about 2.9 million people identify themselves as Native American alone, while an additional 2.3 million identify them as Native American mixed with another ethnic group (Norris, Vines, and Hoeffel 2012).

Note:
Sports Teams with Native American Names

Many Native Americans (and others) believe sports teams with names like the Indians, Braves, and Warriors perpetuate unwelcome stereotypes. (Photo (a) courtesy of public domain/Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Chris Brown/flickr)

The sports world abounds with team names like the Indians, the Warriors, the Braves, and even the Savages and Redskins. These names arise from historically prejudiced views of Native Americans as fierce, brave, and strong savages: attributes that would be beneficial to a sports team, but are not necessarily beneficial to people in the United States who should be seen as more than just fierce savages.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has been campaigning against the use of such mascots, asserting that the “warrior savage myth . . . reinforces the racist view that Indians are uncivilized and uneducated and it has been used to justify policies of forced assimilation and destruction of Indian culture” (NCAI Resolution #TUL-05-087 2005). The campaign has met with only limited success. While some teams have changed their names, hundreds of professional, college, and K–12 school teams still have names derived from this stereotype. Another group, American Indian Cultural Support (AICS), is especially concerned with the use of such names at K–12 schools, influencing children when they should be gaining a fuller and

more realistic understanding of Native Americans than such stereotypes supply.
What do you think about such names? Should they be allowed or banned? What argument would a symbolic interactionist make on this topic?

How and Why They Came

The earliest immigrants to America arrived millennia before European immigrants. Dates of the migration are debated with estimates ranging from between 45,000 and 12,000 BCE. It is thought that early Indians migrated to this new land in search of big game to hunt, which they found in huge herds of grazing herbivores in the Americas. Over the centuries and then the millennia, Native American culture blossomed into an intricate web of hundreds of interconnected tribes, each with its own customs, traditions, languages, and religions.

History of Intergroup Relations

Native American culture prior to European settlement is referred to as Pre-Columbian: that is, prior to the coming of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Mistakenly believing that he had landed in the East Indies, Columbus named the indigenous people “Indians,” a name that has persisted for centuries despite being a geographical misnomer and one used to blanket 500 distinct groups who each have their own languages and traditions.

The history of intergroup relations between European colonists and Native Americans is a brutal one. As discussed in the section on genocide, the effect of European settlement of the Americans was to nearly destroy the indigenous population. And although Native Americans’ lack of immunity to European diseases caused the most deaths, overt mistreatment of Native Americans by Europeans was devastating as well.

From the first Spanish colonists to the French, English, and Dutch who followed, European settlers took what land they wanted and expanded

across the continent at will. If indigenous people tried to retain their stewardship of the land, Europeans fought them off with superior weapons. A key element of this issue is the indigenous view of land and land ownership. Most tribes considered the earth a living entity whose resources they were stewards of, the concepts of land ownership and conquest didn't exist in Native American society. Europeans' domination of the Americas was indeed a conquest; one scholar points out that Native Americans are the only minority group in the United States whose subordination occurred purely through conquest by the dominant group (Marger 1993).

After the establishment of the United States government, discrimination against Native Americans was codified and formalized in a series of laws intended to subjugate them and keep them from gaining any power. Some of the most impactful laws are as follows:

- The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced the relocation of any native tribes east of the Mississippi River to lands west of the river.
- The Indian Appropriation Acts funded further removals and declared that no Indian tribe could be recognized as an independent nation, tribe, or power with which the U.S. government would have to make treaties. This made it even easier for the U.S. government to take land it wanted.
- The Dawes Act of 1887 reversed the policy of isolating Native Americans on reservations, instead forcing them onto individual properties that were intermingled with white settlers, thereby reducing their capacity for power as a group.

Native American culture was further eroded by the establishment of Indian boarding schools in the late nineteenth century. These schools, run by both Christian missionaries and the United States government, had the express purpose of "civilizing" Native American children and assimilating them into white society. The boarding schools were located off-reservation to ensure that children were separated from their families and culture. Schools forced children to cut their hair, speak English, and practice Christianity. Physical and sexual abuses were rampant for decades; only in 1987 did the Bureau of Indian Affairs issue a policy on sexual abuse in boarding schools. Some scholars argue that many of the problems that Native Americans face

today result from almost a century of mistreatment at these boarding schools.

Current Status

The eradication of Native American culture continued until the 1960s, when Native Americans were able to participate in and benefit from the civil rights movement. The Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 guaranteed Indian tribes most of the rights of the United States Bill of Rights. New laws like the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 and the Education Assistance Act of the same year recognized tribal governments and gave them more power. Indian boarding schools have dwindled to only a few, and Native American cultural groups are striving to preserve and maintain old traditions to keep them from being lost forever.

However, Native Americans (some of whom now wished to be called American Indians so as to avoid the “savage” connotations of the term “native”) still suffer the effects of centuries of degradation. Long-term poverty, inadequate education, cultural dislocation, and high rates of unemployment contribute to Native American populations falling to the bottom of the economic spectrum. Native Americans also suffer disproportionately with lower life expectancies than most groups in the United States.

African Americans

As discussed in the section on race, the term African American can be a misnomer for many individuals. Many people with dark skin may have their more recent roots in Europe or the Caribbean, seeing themselves as Dominican American or Dutch American. Further, actual immigrants from Africa may feel that they have more of a claim to the term African American than those who are many generations removed from ancestors who originally came to this country. This section will focus on the experience of the slaves who were transported from Africa to the United

States, and their progeny. Currently, the U.S. Census Bureau (2014) estimates that 13.2 percent of the United States' population is black.

How and Why They Came

If Native Americans are the only minority group whose subordinate status occurred by conquest, African Americans are the exemplar minority group in the United States whose ancestors did not come here by choice. A Dutch sea captain brought the first Africans to the Virginia colony of Jamestown in 1619 and sold them as indentured servants. This was not an uncommon practice for either blacks or whites, and indentured servants were in high demand. For the next century, black and white indentured servants worked side by side. But the growing agricultural economy demanded greater and cheaper labor, and by 1705, Virginia passed the slave codes declaring that any foreign-born non-Christian could be a slave, and that slaves were considered property.

The next 150 years saw the rise of U.S. slavery, with black Africans being kidnapped from their own lands and shipped to the New World on the trans-Atlantic journey known as the Middle Passage. Once in the Americas, the black population grew until U.S.-born blacks outnumbered those born in Africa. But colonial (and later, U.S.) slave codes declared that the child of a slave was a slave, so the slave class was created. By 1808, the slave trade was internal in the United States, with slaves being bought and sold across state lines like livestock.

History of Intergroup Relations

There is no starker illustration of the dominant-subordinate group relationship than that of slavery. In order to justify their severely discriminatory behavior, slaveholders and their supporters had to view blacks as innately inferior. Slaves were denied even the most basic rights of citizenship, a crucial factor for slaveholders and their supporters. Slavery poses an excellent example of conflict theory’s perspective on race

relations; the dominant group needed complete control over the subordinate group in order to maintain its power. Whippings, executions, rapes, denial of schooling and health care were all permissible and widely practiced.

Slavery eventually became an issue over which the nation divided into geographically and ideologically distinct factions, leading to the Civil War. And while the abolition of slavery on moral grounds was certainly a catalyst to war, it was not the only driving force. Students of U.S. history will know that the institution of slavery was crucial to the Southern economy, whose production of crops like rice, cotton, and tobacco relied on the virtually limitless and cheap labor that slavery provided. In contrast, the North didn't benefit economically from slavery, resulting in an economic disparity tied to racial/political issues.

A century later, the civil rights movement was characterized by boycotts, marches, sit-ins, and freedom rides: demonstrations by a subordinate group that would no longer willingly submit to domination. The major blow to America's formally institutionalized racism was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This Act, which is still followed today, banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Some sociologists, however, would argue that institutionalized racism persists.

Current Status

Although government-sponsored, formalized discrimination against African Americans has been outlawed, true equality does not yet exist. The National Urban League's *2011 Equality Index* reports that blacks' overall equality level with whites has dropped in the past year, from 71.5 percent to 71.1 percent in 2010. The *Index*, which has been published since 2005, notes a growing trend of increased inequality with whites, especially in the areas of unemployment, insurance coverage, and incarceration. Blacks also trail whites considerably in the areas of economics, health, and education.

To what degree do racism and prejudice contribute to this continued inequality? The answer is complex. 2008 saw the election of this country's first African American president: Barack Hussein Obama. Despite being

popularly identified as black, we should note that President Obama is of a mixed background that is equally white, and although all presidents have been publicly mocked at times (Gerald Ford was depicted as a klutz, Bill Clinton as someone who could not control his libido), a startling percentage of the critiques of Obama have been based on his race. The most blatant of these was the controversy over his birth certificate, where the "birther" movement questioned his citizenship and right to hold office. Although blacks have come a long way from slavery, the echoes of centuries of disempowerment are still evident.

Asian Americans

Like many groups this section discusses, Asian Americans represent a great diversity of cultures and backgrounds. The experience of a Japanese American whose family has been in the United States for three generations will be drastically different from a Laotian American who has only been in the United States for a few years. This section primarily discusses Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese immigrants and shows the differences between their experiences. The most recent estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau (2014) suggest about 5.3 percent of the population identify themselves as Asian.

How and Why They Came

The national and ethnic diversity of Asian American immigration history is reflected in the variety of their experiences in joining U.S. society. Asian immigrants have come to the United States in waves, at different times, and for different reasons.

The first Asian immigrants to come to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century were Chinese. These immigrants were primarily men whose intention was to work for several years in order to earn incomes to support their families in China. Their main destination was the American West, where the Gold Rush was drawing people with its lure of abundant money. The construction of the Transcontinental Railroad was underway at

this time, and the Central Pacific section hired thousands of migrant Chinese men to complete the laying of rails across the rugged Sierra Nevada mountain range. Chinese men also engaged in other manual labor like mining and agricultural work. The work was grueling and underpaid, but like many immigrants, they persevered.

Japanese immigration began in the 1880s, on the heels of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Many Japanese immigrants came to Hawaii to participate in the sugar industry; others came to the mainland, especially to California. Unlike the Chinese, however, the Japanese had a strong government that negotiated with the U.S. government to ensure the well-being of their immigrants. Japanese men were able to bring their wives and families to the United States, and were thus able to produce second- and third-generation Japanese Americans more quickly than their Chinese counterparts.

The most recent large-scale Asian immigration came from Korea and Vietnam and largely took place during the second half of the twentieth century. While Korean immigration has been fairly gradual, Vietnamese immigration occurred primarily post-1975, after the fall of Saigon and the establishment of restrictive communist policies in Vietnam. Whereas many Asian immigrants came to the United States to seek better economic opportunities, Vietnamese immigrants came as political refugees, seeking asylum from harsh conditions in their homeland. The Refugee Act of 1980 helped them to find a place to settle in the United States.

Thirty-five Vietnamese refugees wait to be taken aboard the amphibious USS *Blue Ridge (LCC-19)*. They are being rescued from a thirty-five-foot fishing boat 350 miles northeast of Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, after spending eight days at sea. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Navy/Wikimedia Commons)

History of Intergroup Relations

Chinese immigration came to an abrupt end with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act was a result of anti-Chinese sentiment burgeoned by a depressed economy and loss of jobs. White workers blamed Chinese migrants for taking jobs, and the passage of the Act meant the number of Chinese workers decreased. Chinese men did not have the funds to return to China or to bring their families to the United States, so they remained physically and culturally segregated in the Chinatowns of large cities. Later legislation, the Immigration Act of 1924, further curtailed Chinese immigration. The Act included the race-based National Origins Act, which was aimed at keeping U.S. ethnic stock as undiluted as possible by reducing

"undesirable" immigrants. It was not until after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that Chinese immigration again increased, and many Chinese families were reunited.

Although Japanese Americans have deep, long-reaching roots in the United States, their history here has not always been smooth. The California Alien Land Law of 1913 was aimed at them and other Asian immigrants, and it prohibited aliens from owning land. An even uglier action was the Japanese internment camps of World War II, discussed earlier as an illustration of expulsion.

Current Status

Asian Americans certainly have been subject to their share of racial prejudice, despite the seemingly positive stereotype as the model minority. The **model minority** stereotype is applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching significant educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without challenging the existing establishment.

This stereotype is typically applied to Asian groups in the United States, and it can result in unrealistic expectations, by putting a stigma on members of this group that do not meet the expectations. Stereotyping all Asians as smart and capable can also lead to a lack of much-needed government assistance and to educational and professional discrimination.

Hispanic Americans

Hispanic Americans have a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities. The segment of the U.S. population that self-identifies as Hispanic in 2013 was recently estimated at 17.1 percent of the total (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 75 percent of the respondents who identify as Hispanic report being of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban origin. Of the total Hispanic group, 60 percent reported as Mexican, 44 percent reported as Cuban, and 9 percent reported as Puerto Rican. Remember that the U.S. Census allows people to report as being more than one ethnicity.

Not only are there wide differences among the different origins that make up the Hispanic American population, but there are also different names for the group itself. The 2010 U.S. Census states that “Hispanic” or “Latino” refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.” There have been some disagreements over whether Hispanic or Latino is the correct term for a group this diverse, and whether it would be better for people to refer to themselves as being of their origin specifically, for example, Mexican American or Dominican American. This section will compare the experiences of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans.

How and Why They Came

Mexican Americans form the largest Hispanic subgroup and also the oldest. Mexican migration to the United States started in the early 1900s in response to the need for cheap agricultural labor. Mexican migration was often circular; workers would stay for a few years and then go back to Mexico with more money than they could have made in their country of origin. The length of Mexico’s shared border with the United States has made immigration easier than for many other immigrant groups.

Cuban Americans are the second-largest Hispanic subgroup, and their history is quite different from that of Mexican Americans. The main wave of Cuban immigration to the United States started after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959 and reached its crest with the Mariel boatlift in 1980. Castro’s Cuban Revolution ushered in an era of communism that continues to this day. To avoid having their assets seized by the government, many wealthy and educated Cubans migrated north, generally to the Miami area.

History of Intergroup Relations

For several decades, Mexican workers crossed the long border into the United States, both legally and illegally, to work in the fields that provided produce for the developing United States. Western growers needed a steady

supply of labor, and the 1940s and 1950s saw the official federal Bracero Program (*bracero* is Spanish for *strong-arm*) that offered protection to Mexican guest workers. Interestingly, 1954 also saw the enactment of "Operation Wetback," which deported thousands of illegal Mexican workers. From these examples, we can see the U.S. treatment of immigration from Mexico has been ambivalent at best.

Sociologist Douglas Massey (2006) suggests that although the average standard of living in Mexico may be lower in the United States, it is not so low as to make permanent migration the goal of most Mexicans. However, the strengthening of the border that began with 1986's Immigration Reform and Control Act has made one-way migration the rule for most Mexicans. Massey argues that the rise of illegal one-way immigration of Mexicans is a direct outcome of the law that was intended to reduce it.

Cuban Americans, perhaps because of their relative wealth and education level at the time of immigration, have fared better than many immigrants. Further, because they were fleeing a Communist country, they were given refugee status and offered protection and social services. The Cuban Migration Agreement of 1995 has curtailed legal immigration from Cuba, leading many Cubans to try to immigrate illegally by boat. According to a 2009 report from the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. government applies a "wet foot/dry foot" policy toward Cuban immigrants; Cubans who are intercepted while still at sea will be returned to Cuba, while those who reach the shore will be permitted to stay in the United States.

Current Status

Mexican Americans, especially those who are here illegally, are at the center of a national debate about immigration. Myers (2007) observes that no other minority group (except the Chinese) has immigrated to the United States in such an environment of illegality. He notes that in some years, three times as many Mexican immigrants may have entered the United States illegally as those who arrived legally. It should be noted that this is due to enormous disparity of economic opportunity on two sides of an open border, not because of any inherent inclination to break laws. In his report,

“Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in the United States,” Jacob Vigdor (2008) states that Mexican immigrants experience relatively low rates of economic and civil assimilation. He further suggests that “the slow rates of economic and civic assimilation set Mexicans apart from other immigrants, and may reflect the fact that the large numbers of Mexican immigrants residing in the United States illegally have few opportunities to advance themselves along these dimensions.”

By contrast, Cuban Americans are often seen as a model minority group within the larger Hispanic group. Many Cubans had higher socioeconomic status when they arrived in this country, and their anti-Communist agenda has made them welcome refugees to this country. In south Florida, especially, Cuban Americans are active in local politics and professional life. As with Asian Americans, however, being a model minority can mask the issue of powerlessness that these minority groups face in U.S. society.

Note:
Arizona’s Senate Bill 1070

Protesters in Arizona dispute the harsh new anti-immigration law. (Photo courtesy of rprathap/flickr)

As both legal and illegal immigrants, and with high population numbers, Mexican Americans are often the target of stereotyping, racism, and

discrimination. A harsh example of this is in Arizona, where a stringent immigration law—known as SB 1070 (for Senate Bill 1070)—has caused a nationwide controversy. The law requires that during a lawful stop, detention, or arrest, Arizona police officers must establish the immigration status of anyone they suspect may be here illegally. The law makes it a crime for individuals to fail to have documents confirming their legal status, and it gives police officers the right to detain people they suspect may be in the country illegally.

To many, the most troublesome aspect of this law is the latitude it affords police officers in terms of whose citizenship they may question. Having "reasonable suspicion that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States" is reason enough to demand immigration papers (Senate Bill 1070 2010). Critics say this law will encourage racial profiling (the illegal practice of law enforcement using race as a basis for suspecting someone of a crime), making it hazardous to be caught "Driving While Brown," a takeoff on the legal term Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or the slang reference of "Driving While Black." Driving While Brown refers to the likelihood of getting pulled over just for being nonwhite.

SB 1070 has been the subject of many lawsuits, from parties as diverse as Arizona police officers, the American Civil Liberties Union, and even the federal government, which is suing on the basis of Arizona contradicting federal immigration laws (ACLU 2011). The future of SB 1070 is uncertain, but many other states have tried or are trying to pass similar measures. Do you think such measures are appropriate?

Arab Americans

If ever a category was hard to define, the various groups lumped under the name "Arab American" is it. After all, Hispanic Americans or Asian Americans are so designated because of their counties of origin. But for Arab Americans, their country of origin—Arabia—has not existed for centuries. In addition, Arab Americans represent all religious practices, despite the stereotype that all Arabic people practice Islam. As Myers (2007) asserts, not all Arabs are Muslim, and not all Muslims are Arab, complicating the stereotype of what it means to be an Arab American.

Geographically, the Arab region comprises the Middle East and parts of northern Africa. People whose ancestry lies in that area or who speak primarily Arabic may consider themselves Arabs.

The U.S. Census has struggled with the issue of Arab identity. The 2010 Census, as in previous years, did not offer an “Arab” box to check under the question of race. Individuals who want to be counted as Arabs had to check the box for “Some other race” and then write in their race. However, when the Census data is tallied, they will be marked as white. This is problematic, however, denying Arab Americans opportunities for federal assistance. According to the best estimates of the U.S. Census Bureau, the Arabic population in the United States grew from 850,000 in 1990 to 1.2 million in 2000, an increase of .07 percent (Asi and Beaulieu 2013).

Why They Came

The first Arab immigrants came to this country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were predominantly Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian Christians, and they came to escape persecution and to make a better life. These early immigrants and their descendants, who were more likely to think of themselves as Syrian or Lebanese than Arab, represent almost half of the Arab American population today (Myers 2007). Restrictive immigration policies from the 1920s until 1965 curtailed all immigration, but Arab immigration since 1965 has been steady. Immigrants from this time period have been more likely to be Muslim and more highly educated, escaping political unrest and looking for better opportunities.

History of Intergroup Relations

Relations between Arab Americans and the dominant majority have been marked by mistrust, misinformation, and deeply entrenched beliefs. Helen Samhan of the Arab American Institute suggests that Arab-Israeli conflicts in the 1970s contributed significantly to cultural and political anti-Arab sentiment in the United States (2001). The United States has historically

supported the State of Israel, while some Middle Eastern countries deny the existence of the Israeli state. Disputes over these issues have involved Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.

As is often the case with stereotyping and prejudice, the actions of extremists come to define the entire group, regardless of the fact that most U.S. citizens with ties to the Middle Eastern community condemn terrorist actions, as do most inhabitants of the Middle East. Would it be fair to judge all Catholics by the events of the Inquisition? Of course, the United States was deeply affected by the events of September 11, 2001. This event has left a deep scar on the American psyche, and it has fortified anti-Arab sentiment for a large percentage of Americans. In the first month after 9/11, hundreds of hate crimes were perpetrated against people who looked like they might be of Arab descent.

The proposed Park51 Muslim Community Center generated heated controversy due to its close proximity to Ground Zero. In these photos, people march in protest against the center, while counter-protesters demonstrate their support. (Photos (a) and (b) courtesy of David Shankbone/Wikimedia Commons)

Current Status

Although the rate of hate crimes against Arab Americans has slowed, Arab Americans are still victims of racism and prejudice. Racial profiling has proceeded against Arab Americans as a matter of course since 9/11. Particularly when engaged in air travel, being young and Arab-looking is enough to warrant a special search or detainment. This Islamophobia

(irrational fear of or hatred against Muslims) does not show signs of abating. Scholars noted that white domestic terrorists like Timothy McVeigh, who detonated a bomb at an Oklahoma courthouse in 1995, have not inspired similar racial profiling or hate crimes against whites.

White Ethnic Americans

As we have seen, there is no minority group that fits easily in a category or that can be described simply. While sociologists believe that individual experiences can often be understood in light of their social characteristics (such as race, class, or gender), we must balance this perspective with awareness that no two individuals' experiences are alike. Making generalizations can lead to stereotypes and prejudice. The same is true for white ethnic Americans, who come from diverse backgrounds and have had a great variety of experiences. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), 77.7 percent of U.S. adults currently identify themselves as white alone. In this section, we will focus on German, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants.

Why They Came

White ethnic Europeans formed the second and third great waves of immigration, from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. They joined a newly minted United States that was primarily made up of white Protestants from England. While most immigrants came searching for a better life, their experiences were not all the same.

The first major influx of European immigrants came from Germany and Ireland, starting in the 1820s. Germans came both for economic opportunity and to escape political unrest and military conscription, especially after the Revolutions of 1848. Many German immigrants of this period were political refugees: liberals who wanted to escape from an oppressive government. They were well-off enough to make their way inland, and they formed heavily German enclaves in the Midwest that exist to this day.

The Irish immigrants of the same time period were not always as well off financially, especially after the Irish Potato Famine of 1845. Irish immigrants settled mainly in the cities of the East Coast, where they were employed as laborers and where they faced significant discrimination.

German and Irish immigration continued into the late 19th century and earlier 20th century, at which point the numbers for Southern and Eastern European immigrants started growing as well. Italians, mainly from the Southern part of the country, began arriving in large numbers in the 1890s. Eastern European immigrants—people from Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary—started arriving around the same time. Many of these Eastern Europeans were peasants forced into a hardscrabble existence in their native lands; political unrest, land shortages, and crop failures drove them to seek better opportunities in the United States. The Eastern European immigration wave also included Jewish people escaping pogroms (anti-Jewish uprisings) of Eastern Europe and the Pale of Settlement in what was then Poland and Russia.

History of Intergroup Relations

In a broad sense, German immigrants were not victimized to the same degree as many of the other subordinate groups this section discusses. While they may not have been welcomed with open arms, they were able to settle in enclaves and establish roots. A notable exception to this was during the lead up to World War I and through World War II, when anti-German sentiment was virulent.

Irish immigrants, many of whom were very poor, were more of an underclass than the Germans. In Ireland, the English had oppressed the Irish for centuries, eradicating their language and culture and discriminating against their religion (Catholicism). Although the Irish had a larger population than the English, they were a subordinate group. This dynamic reached into the new world, where Anglo Americans saw Irish immigrants as a race apart: dirty, lacking ambition, and suitable for only the most menial jobs. In fact, Irish immigrants were subject to criticism identical to that with which the dominant group characterized African Americans. By

necessity, Irish immigrants formed tight communities segregated from their Anglo neighbors.

The later wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe was also subject to intense discrimination and prejudice. In particular, the dominant group—which now included second- and third-generation Germans and Irish—saw Italian immigrants as the dregs of Europe and worried about the purity of the American race (Myers 2007). Italian immigrants lived in segregated slums in Northeastern cities, and in some cases were even victims of violence and lynchings similar to what African Americans endured. They worked harder and were paid less than other workers, often doing the dangerous work that other laborers were reluctant to take on.

Current Status

The U.S. Census from 2008 shows that 16.5 percent of respondents reported being of German descent: the largest group in the country. For many years, German Americans endeavored to maintain a strong cultural identity, but they are now culturally assimilated into the dominant culture.

There are now more Irish Americans in the United States than there are Irish in Ireland. One of the country's largest cultural groups, Irish Americans have slowly achieved acceptance and assimilation into the dominant group.

Myers (2007) states that Italian Americans' cultural assimilation is "almost complete, but with remnants of ethnicity." The presence of "Little Italy" neighborhoods—originally segregated slums where Italians congregated in the nineteenth century—exist today. While tourists flock to the saints' festivals in Little Italies, most Italian Americans have moved to the suburbs at the same rate as other white groups.

Summary

The history of the U.S. people contains an infinite variety of experiences that sociologist understand follow patterns. From the indigenous people

who first inhabited these lands to the waves of immigrants over the past 500 years, migration is an experience with many shared characteristics. Most groups have experienced various degrees of prejudice and discrimination as they have gone through the process of assimilation.

Further Research

Are people interested in reclaiming their ethnic identities? Read this article and decide:

The White Ethnic Revival: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/ethnic_revival

What is the current racial composition of the United States? Review up-to-the minute statistics at the United States Census Bureau here: http://www.census.gov/

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Glossary

model minority

the stereotype applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching higher educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without protest against the majority establishment

Introduction to Social Stratification in the United States class="introduction"

This house, formerly owned by the famous television producer, Aaron Spelling, was for a time listed for $150 million dollars. It is considered one of the most extravagant homes in the United States, and is a testament to the wealth generated in some industries. (Photo courtesy of Atwater Village Newbie/flickr)

Aaron grew up on a farm in rural Ohio, left home to serve in the Army, and returned a few years later to take over the family farm. He moved into the same house he had grown up in and soon married a young woman with whom he had attended high school. As they began to have children, they quickly realized that the income from the farm was no longer sufficient to meet their needs. Aaron, with little experience beyond the farm, accepted a job as a clerk at a local grocery store. It was there that his life and the lives of his wife and children were changed forever.

One of the managers at the store liked Aaron, his attitude, and his work ethic. He took Aaron under his wing and began to groom him for advancement at the store. Aaron rose through the ranks with ease. Then the manager encouraged him to take a few classes at a local college. This was the first time Aaron had seriously thought about college. Could he be successful, Aaron wondered? Could he actually be the first one in his family to earn a degree? Fortunately, his wife also believed in him and supported his decision to take his first class. Aaron asked his wife and his manager to keep his college enrollment a secret. He did not want others to know about it in case he failed.

Aaron was nervous on his first day of class. He was older than the other students, and he had never considered himself college material. Through hard work and determination, however, he did very well in the class. While he still doubted himself, he enrolled in another class. Again, he performed very well. As his doubt began to fade, he started to take more and more classes. Before he knew it, he was walking across the stage to receive a Bachelor’s degree with honors. The ceremony seemed surreal to Aaron. He couldn’t believe he had finished college, which once seemed like an impossible feat.

Shortly after graduation, Aaron was admitted into a graduate program at a well-respected university where he earned a Master’s degree. He had not only become the first from his family to attend college but also he had earned a graduate degree. Inspired by Aaron’s success, his wife enrolled at a technical college, obtained a degree in nursing, and became a registered nurse working in a local hospital’s labor and delivery department. Aaron and his wife both worked their way up the career ladder in their respective fields and became leaders in their organizations. They epitomized the American Dream—they worked hard and it paid off.

This story may sound familiar. After all, nearly one in three first-year college students is a first-generation degree candidate, and it is well documented that many are not as successful as Aaron. According to the Center for Student Opportunity, a national nonprofit, 89 percent of first-generation students will not earn an undergraduate degree within six years of starting their studies. In fact, these students “drop out of college at four times the rate of peers whose parents have postsecondary degrees” (Center for Student Opportunity quoted in Huot 2014).

Why do students with parents who have completed college tend to graduate more often than those students whose parents do not hold degrees? That question and many others will be answered as we explore social stratification.

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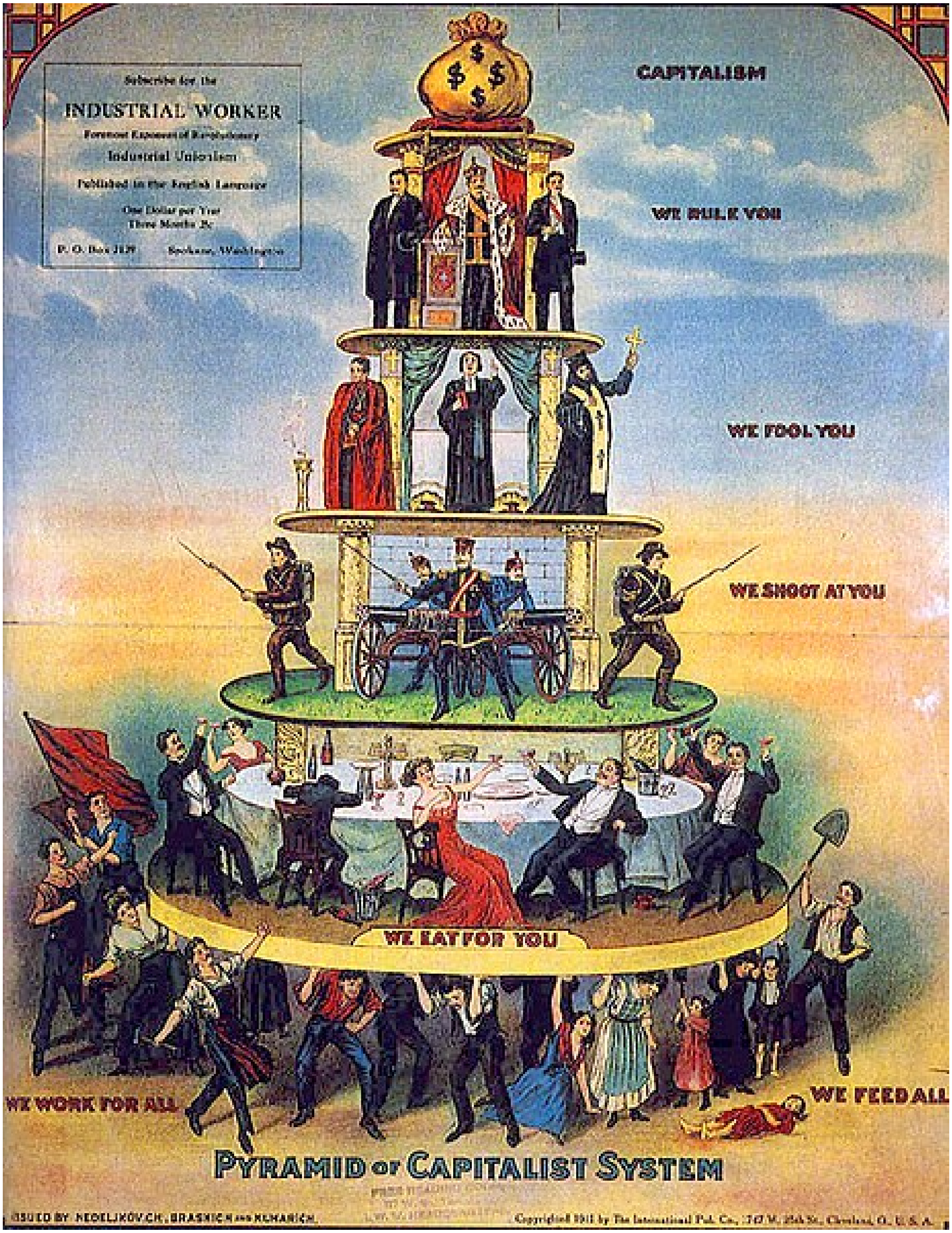
What Is Social Stratification?

- Differentiate between open and closed stratification systems
- Distinguish between caste and class systems
- Understand meritocracy as an ideal system of stratification



A 1911 Industrial Worker (IWW newspaper) publication advocating industrial unionism that shows the critique of capitalism. It is based

on a flyer of the "Union of Russian Socialists" spread in 1900 and 1901. (Author unknown.)

"Stratification" is a fancy terminology for "ranking," and **social stratification** in our contemporary societies refers, simply, to ranking people mostly by the three major social-class determinants: education, occupation, and income.

The people who live in these houses most likely share similar levels of income and education. Neighborhoods often house people of the same social standing. Wealthy families do not typically live next door to poorer families, though this varies depending on the particular city and country. (Photo courtesy of Orin Zebest/flickr)

Social locations--including social class--tend to be passed on from one generation to the next through their own "class traits," be they middle-class traits or lower-class traits. For example, students whose parents have college degrees (a middle-class trait) tend to feel more comfortable in

surviving college courses, compared to those who are the first generation to attend a college among other family members (a lower-class trait). As a result, the former are more likely than the latter to finish their school, just like their parents.

Research indicates, indeed, that more than a half of CUNY community college students say they are the first generation in their households to attend a college (OIRA 2016). Very sadly, though, their graduation rates are lower than 30% in 10 years, and, even more sadly, more than a half disappear in the first 2 years (OIRA 2015).

This never means that it's no use for those whose parents don't have a college degree to struggle in a college. Quite the contrary. As will be discussed below, since the breakthrough for climbing up the social class ladder is higher education, it's crucially important to study hard and clear the hurdle.

Recent Economic Changes and U.S. Stratification

As a result of the Great Recession resulting mostly from the subprime mortgage crisis of 2007 (see Ch. 18, Work and the Economy), many families and individuals found themselves struggling like never before. The nation fell into a period of prolonged and exceptionally high unemployment. While no one was completely insulated from the recession, perhaps those in the lower classes felt the impact most profoundly. Before the recession, many were living paycheck to paycheck or even had been living comfortably. As the recession hit, they were often among the first to lose their jobs. Unable to find replacement employment, they faced more than loss of income. Their homes were foreclosed, their cars were repossessed, and their ability to afford healthcare was taken away. This put many in the position of deciding whether to put food on the table or fill a needed prescription.

But the Great Recession, like the Great Depression, has changed social attitudes. Where once it was important to demonstrate wealth by wearing expensive clothing items like Calvin Klein shirts and Louis Vuitton shoes, now there’s a new, thriftier way of thinking. In many circles, it has become

hip to be frugal. It’s no longer about how much we spend, but about how much we don't spend. Think of shows like *Extreme Couponing* on TLC and songs like Macklemore’s “Thrift Shop.”

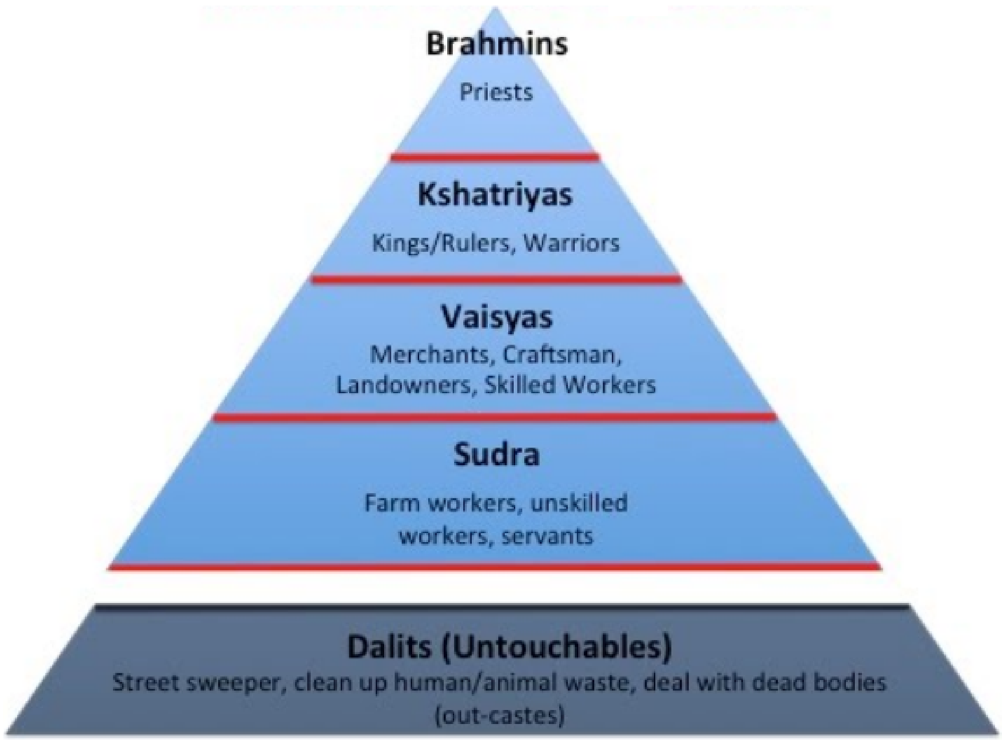
But then again, the way Americans view the economy has undergone a dramatic shift in the week since Donald Trump was elected president of the U.S. in November, 2016 (Business Insider 2016). There was a surge in economic confidence, according to Gallup's weekly tracking poll of how Americans feel about the direction of the country. Since then, stock prices don't stop going up and the unemployment rates don't stop going down. Great! Let's forget about "thrift shop"!

Okay, but let's not take a huge loan... See? In the latter half of 2018, again, as stock prices lost all the gain made in the previous one and a half years (mostly for the trade conflict between China and the U.S.), no one seems sure about the direction of the world economy in 2019...

Systems of Stratification

Sociologists distinguish between two types of systems of stratification. **Closed systems** accommodate little change in social location. They do not allow people to shift locations and do not permit social relationships between different locations. **Open systems**, which are based on achievement, allow movement and interaction between different layers and classes. Different stratification systems--one of the major social conditions--reflect, emphasize, and foster certain cultural values and shape individual beliefs.

The Caste System



India used to have a rigid caste system. The people in the lowest caste suffered from extreme poverty and were shunned by society. Some aspects of India’s defunct caste system remain socially relevant. (Courtesy of Giveaway285)

Caste systems are closed stratification systems in which there is no "social mobility," or the possibility of going up/down between social locations. In a caste system, that is, people die in the caste in which they were born. Unlike class systems--which will be discussed below--caste systems do not reward studying hard or working hard in terms of going up social locations.

The system is reinforced by cultural values and norms, such as beliefs in fate, destiny, and acceptance of ranking, rather than individual will and freedom. These values and norms are perpetuated, first, through socialization and, then, through social sanction. Children are taught the importance of understanding their social locations, which are ascribed and

fixed, and as they grow, they reaffirm it through social interactions with others all the time, exchanging rewards and, when necessary, punishments.

In order to maintain the boundaries between the castes, the system prohibits **exogamy** (marriage between different social locations) and allows only **endogamy** (marriage within the same social locations). Why? That's because if people engaged in exogamy freely, the boundaries would become messed up, and the system itself would collapse, ultimately. Think about offspring in exogamy, for example. Where would they belong to?

To be noted, though, many states in the U.S. prohibited exogamy in the past, as well. The freedom to love across the racial line is a relatively recent phenomenon in American history (Moran 2001, p. 4). From colonial times, the so-called “antimiscegenation laws” banning interracial sex and marriage were a common feature of state law. Until 1967 (!), the laws were not repealed as unconstitutional.

But what was the purpose of such laws? They helped maintain the boundaries between whites and non-whites. This is one of the major reasons why many sociologists suggest that the U.S. is actually a caste system based on fake liberty and fake equality.

Through the curious case of Thomas Jefferson, the third U.S. president and one of the 12 slaveholders out of the first 18 U.S. presidents, the American reality related to interracial sexual relations might be peeped in. He lived in Virginia, a state that maintained the antimiscegenation laws, but allegedly, he fathered several children with a slave he owned. This may reveal that although the antimiscegenation laws were made in order to regulate interracial sex, the laws didn't work as effectively as expected; many people still enjoyed such prohibited activity, secretly.

Although the caste system in India has been officially dismantled, its residual presence in Indian society is deeply embedded. In rural areas, aspects of the tradition are more likely to remain, while urban centers show less evidence of this past. In India’s larger cities, people have more opportunities to choose their own career paths and marriage partners, particularly since the 1970s (Leonard et al. 1980).

The Class System

A **class system** is an open stratification system, in which there is "social mobility," or the possibility of going up/down between social locations. Okay, then, how much money should one make to go up to upper class?

Yes, money is important, but money alone would not enable anybody to go up to upper class. The sociological theory of social class is based on the three major determinants including education, occupation, and income. The way these determinants are related to one another is this. The level of your education can determine the type of your occupation, and the type of your occupation can determine the level of your income. For upward mobility, as aforementioned, the breakthrough is thus education.

But here's what you need to know: FORGET ABOUT "upper class." In addition to the three determinants above, that is, it requires you to be born in economically and politically influential families placed at the top 1% of the U.S. population. What do you think?

How many classes are there, then? The number of classes is not clearly agreed upon even among sociologists. Some count 4, for example, while another offer 6 and still another, 8. Karl Marx even insisted that there are only 2 classes, namely, bourgeoisie and proletariat. The important thing to know, however, is that unlike the blood type or the final grade for this course, social class is not decisive but is a matter of definition based upon the three determinants just discussed above. Having said that, though, it is not amorphous at all, either.

The U.S. Social Class Ladder

Social Class	Education	Occupation	Income	Percentage of Population
Capitalist	Prestigious university	Investors and heirs, a few top executives	$1,000,000+	1%
Upper Middle	College or university, often with postgraduate study	Professionals and upper managers	$125,000+	15%
Lower Middle	High school or college; often apprenticeship	Semiprofessionals and lower managers, craftspeople, foremen	About $60,000	34%
Working	High school	Factory workers, clerical workers, low-paid retail sales, and craftspeople	About $36,000	30%
Working Poor	High school and some high school	Laborers, service workers, low-paid salespeople	About $19,000	15%
Underclass	Some high school	Unemployed and part-time, on welfare	Under $12,000	5%

Source: Henslin (2014, p. 231)

The image shown above ("The U.S. Social Class Ladder") presents 6 classes, but this number shouldn't be seen as equally important to the three columns placed in the middle: education, occupation, and income. Although Henslin (2015, p. 231), the source of this image, names the top 1% "capitalist," it's the same as "upper class," which as suggested above is different from all other classes. When "upper middle" and "lower middle" are combined into "middle class," the number of classes can be reduced to 5, rather than 6. Similarly, when "working" and "working poor" are combined into "working class," it can be further reduced to 4, and this still makes sense.

When all the percentages are added up (see the rightmost column above), the U.S. population can be further simplified into: upper class (1%), middle class (49%), and lower class (50%). Notice that middle class is actually placed not in the middle, but above the middle (50%), below which placed is lower class. Most sociological studies of social class examine and compare these two (i.e., ordinary people) in terms of their norms and values, or class traits, excluding upper class (strange people) from analysis-

-with a few exceptions such as C. Wright Mills's "power elite" (which will be discussed in Ch. 17, Government and Politics).

Wait a minute... But which social class do those sports athletes or celebrities who didn't go to a college but who make millions a year belong to? Well, this is a limitation of theories in general. That is, a theory explains "central tendencies" of a given phenomenon, disregarding "exceptions," which do exist but cannot overturn central tendencies (see Ch. 2, Sociological Research). This means that exceptions cannot nullify what a theory indicates.

Meritocracy

Meritocracy is an ideology that suggests that social stratification is the result of personal effort—or merit—that determines social standing. High levels of effort will lead to a high social position, and vice versa. Because of the complex structure of societies, however, processes like socialization, and the realities of economic systems, social standing is influenced by multiple factors—not merit alone. No one can deny the importance of personal effort, but if inequalities exist and are structured in our society, which quite seems to be the case, personal effort alone can't change the situation; society as a whole has to deal with them. The government policy known as the New Deal offered during the 1930s to fight the Great Depression can be a good example for this, rather than charity or donation.

Status Consistency

The term **status consistency** refers to the consistency among the three determinants of social class: education, occupation, and income. This means that if we get the information about one of the determinants, then, it's possible for us to make a good guess about the rest. For example, if a person says she is a medical doctor, would it be difficult for you to guess her education level and income level? Or if another person says he is a cashier, how would you guess? Of course, there are cashiers who have a master's degree and who make more than, say, $200,000 a year (really?),

but what is the probability or central tendencies? Again, the three determinants are consistent within themselves for most people, more or less.

Summary

Stratification systems are either closed, meaning they allow little change in social position, or open, meaning they allow movement and interaction between the layers. A caste system is one in which social standing is based on ascribed status or birth. Class systems are open, with achievement playing a role in social position. People fall into classes based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. A meritocracy is a system of social stratification that confers standing based on personal worth, rewarding effort.

Further Research

The *New York Times* investigated social stratification in their series of articles called “Class Matters.” The online accompaniment to the series includes an interactive graphic called “How Class Works,” which tallies four factors—occupation, education, income, and wealth—and places an individual within a certain class and percentile. What class describes you? Test your class rank on the interactive site: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/NY_Times_how_class_works

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Glossary

caste system

a system in which people are born into a social standing that they will retain their entire lives

class
: a group who shares a common social status based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation

class system
: social standing based on social factors and individual accomplishments

endogamous marriages
: unions of people within the same social category

exogamous unions
: unions of spouses from different social categories

income
: the money a person earns from work or investments

meritocracy
: an ideal system in which personal effort—or merit—determines social standing

primogeniture
: a law stating that all property passes to the firstborn son

social stratification
: a socioeconomic system that divides society's members into categories ranking from high to low, based on things like wealth, power, and prestige

status consistency
: the consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across social categories like income, education, and occupation

wealth
: the value of money and assets a person has from, for example, inheritance

Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

- Understand the U.S. class structure
- Describe several types of social mobility
- Recognize characteristics that define and identify class

Social stratification is shaped, to a great extent, upon unequal distribution of resources. Such resources, which positively or negatively affect stratification, include race, ethnicity, gender, and even social class of one's family in the form of class traits. Regarding the resource of family's social class, some sociologists suggest that "class reproduces itself." Middle-class children are more likely than lower-class children to end up middle class in adult, for their families' positive resource. Again, however, there is a breakthrough for lower-class kids: education.

Standard of Living

Owing to the New Deal immediately followed by World War II, the United States has seen a steady rise in its **standard of living**, the ability of a population to consume goods and services measured, most often, by the "GDP per capita." (If you want to see what this is, read below. If not, don't bother--for now.)

> Okay, good. Here is what you want to see. The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is the total amount of money transacted in a county during a given period of time, including the government spending plus the value of exports minus that of imports. The GDP per capita is the value of GDP divided by the country's population, i.e., the mean average. To be noted, though, if the gap between the rich and the poor is huge, just as seen in the U.S., the GDP per capita hardly indicates the "standard" of living of the country. For this reason, the average income is based not on the mean average, but on the median, the middle value of a given data set that is not affected by too big values (e.g., Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates...).

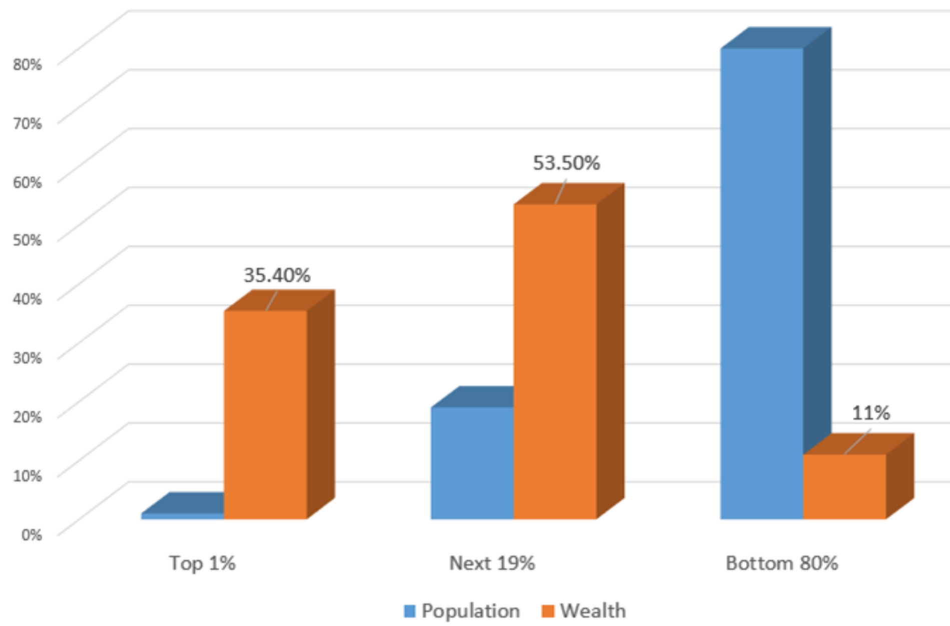
People believe that the United States is a “middle-class society.” In their view, a few people are rich, a few are poor, and most are fairly well off,

belonging to the middle of the social strata. A Federal Reserve Bank study shows, however, that the top 1% of the population holds one-third of the nation's wealth (Kennickell 2009). The rich receive the best schooling, have better healthcare, and consume the most qualified goods and services. On the other hand, millions of people struggle to pay rent, buy food, find work, and afford basic medical care. Single mothers tend to have a lower income and lower standard of living than their married or male counterparts. The GDP per capita, just mentioned above, overlooks this reality. (Okay, you can go back to the paragraph above.)

In the United States, as in most high-income nations, social stratifications and standards of living are in part based on occupation (Lin and Xie 1988). Aside from the obvious impact that income has on someone's standard of living, occupations also influence social standing through the relative levels of prestige they afford. Employment in medicine, law, or engineering confers high status. Teachers and police officers are generally respected, though not considered particularly prestigious. At the other end of the scale, some of the lowest rankings apply to positions like waitress, janitor, and the like.

The most significant threat to the relatively high standard of living we're accustomed to in the United States is the decline of the middle class. The size, income, and wealth of the middle class have all been declining since the 1970s. This is occurring at a time when corporate profits have increased more than 141%, and CEO pay has risen by more than 298% (Popken 2007).

Unequal Distribution of Wealth in the U.S., 2010



Source: G. William Domhoff (2013).

As shown above (Unequal Distribution of Wealth in the U.S., 2010), the top 1% of the U.S. population (upper class) own 35.4% of nation's wealth, and the next 19% (the managerial, professional, and business stratum) had 53.5%, which means that just 20% of the people own a remarkable 89%, leaving only 11% of the wealth for the bottom 80% (wage and salary workers) (Domhoff 2013).

This can be likened to the situation, in which there are 10 people and 10 bananas. Of the 10, 2 enjoy 9 bananas, and 8 share only 1 banana!

The United States has the resources to provide the basic necessities to those in need through a series of federal and state social welfare programs; however, when compared to other first-world countries, such as the UK, Germany, France, and Japan, it lags way behind. In addition, such programs are operated by private corporations for their own profit in the name of people's "welfare." The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which used to be known as the "food stamp" program, is one of the programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Initially, the **social welfare programs** began during the Great Depression in the 1930s for the sake of welfare of those in need itself, rather than profit of corporations. Through the programs, unmarketable or surplus food was

distributed to the hungry, led by the federal and state governments. Gradually, however, big corporations began controlling the programs by lobbying top politicians. Now, the food stamp programs have turned out to be the "largest, most overlooked corporate subsidy" (Time 2012). Not only do the likes of Walmart, Mars, Kroger, and Coca-Cola benefit from SNAP (food stamp), but so do large banks such as J.P. Morgan Chase, which receives tens of millions annually from states in exchange for operating SNAP Electronic Benefits Transfer cards given to recipients. Such programs thus let us peep in the structure of the so-called "military-industrial complex," the circle of top politicians, big corporations, and top leaders of the military (keep this in mind).

Social Classes in the United States

Does taste or fashion sense indicate class? Is there any way to tell if this young man comes from an upper-, middle-, or lower-class background?

Does a person's appearance indicate class? Can you tell a man's education level based on his clothing? Do you know a woman's income by the car she drives?

Upper Class

Members of the upper class can afford to live, work, and play in exclusive places designed for luxury and comfort. (Photo courtesy of PrimeImageMedia.com/flickr)

The upper class is considered the top, and only the powerful elite get to see the view from there. In the United States, people with extreme wealth make up 1 percent of the population, and they own one-third of the country's wealth (Beeghley 2008).

Money provides not just access to material goods, but also access to a lot of power. As corporate leaders, members of the upper class make decisions that affect the job status of millions of people. As media owners, they influence the collective identity of the nation. They run the major network

television stations, radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and sports franchises. As board members of the most influential colleges and universities, they influence cultural attitudes and values. As philanthropists, they establish foundations to support social causes they believe in. As campaign contributors, they sway politicians and fund campaigns, sometimes to protect their own economic interests.

U.S. society has historically distinguished between “old money” (inherited wealth passed from one generation to the next) and “new money” (wealth you have earned and built yourself). While both types may have equal net worth, they have traditionally held different social standings. People of old money, firmly situated in the upper class for generations, have held high prestige. Their families have socialized them to know the customs, norms, and expectations that come with wealth. Often, the very wealthy don’t work for wages. Some study business or become lawyers in order to manage the family fortune. Others, such as Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian, capitalize on being a rich socialite and transform that into celebrity status, flaunting a wealthy lifestyle.

However, new-money members of the upper class are not oriented to the customs and mores of the elite. They haven’t gone to the most exclusive schools. They have not established old-money social ties. People with new money might flaunt their wealth, buying sports cars and mansions, but they might still exhibit behaviors attributed to the middle and lower classes.

The Middle Class

These members of a club likely consider themselves middle class. (Photo courtesy of United Way Canada-Centraide Canada/flickr)

Many people consider themselves middle class, but there are differing ideas about what that means. People with annual incomes of $150,000 call themselves middle class, as do people who annually earn $30,000. That helps explain why, in the United States, the middle class is broken into upper and lower subcategories.

Upper-middle-class people tend to hold bachelor's and postgraduate degrees. They've studied subjects such as business, management, law, or medicine. Lower-middle-class members hold bachelor's degrees from four-year colleges or associate's degrees from two-year community or technical colleges.

Comfort is a key concept to the middle class. Middle-class people work hard and live fairly comfortable lives. Upper-middle-class people tend to pursue careers that earn comfortable incomes. They provide their families with large homes and nice cars. They may go skiing or boating on vacation. Their children receive high-quality education and healthcare (Gilbert 2010).

In the lower middle class, people hold jobs supervised by members of the upper middle class. They fill technical, lower-level management or

administrative support positions. Compared to lower-class work, lower-middle-class jobs carry more prestige and come with slightly higher paychecks. With these incomes, people can afford a decent, mainstream lifestyle, but they struggle to maintain it. They generally don’t have enough income to build significant savings. In addition, their grip on class status is more precarious than in the upper tiers of the class system. When budgets are tight, lower-middle-class people are often the ones to lose their jobs.

The Lower Class

This man is a custodian at a restaurant. His job, which is crucial to the business, is considered lower class. (Photo courtesy of Frederick Md Publicity/flickr)

The lower class is also referred to as the working class. Just like the middle and upper classes, the lower class can be divided into subsets: the working class, the working poor, and the underclass. Compared to the lower middle class, lower-class people have less of an educational background and earn

smaller incomes. They work jobs that require little prior skill or experience and often do routine tasks under close supervision.

Working-class people, the highest subcategory of the lower class, often land decent jobs in fields like custodial or food service. The work is hands-on and often physically demanding, such as landscaping, cooking, cleaning, or building.

Beneath the working class is the working poor. Like the working class, they have unskilled, low-paying employment. However, their jobs rarely offer benefits such as healthcare or retirement planning, and their positions are often seasonal or temporary. They work as sharecroppers, migrant farm workers, housecleaners, and day laborers. Some are high school dropouts. Some are illiterate, unable to read job ads.

How can people work full-time and still be poor? Even working full-time, millions of the working poor earn incomes too meager to support a family. Minimum wage varies from state to state, but in many states it is approaching $8.00 per hour (Department of Labor 2014). At that rate, working 40 hours a week earns $320. That comes to $16,640 a year, before tax and deductions. Even for a single person, the pay is low. A married couple with children will have a hard time covering expenses.

The underclass is the United States' lowest tier. Members of the underclass live mainly in inner cities. Many are unemployed or underemployed. Those who do hold jobs typically perform menial tasks for little pay. Some of the underclass are homeless. For many, welfare systems provide a much-needed support through food assistance, medical care, housing, and the like.

Social Mobility

Social mobility refers to the possibility of going up/down between social locations. Simply, upward mobility is to go up, and downward mobility, to go down. When the unit of analysis is the individual, there are two types: intergenerational mobility (the difference between your parents and you in adult in social class) and intragenerational mobility (the difference between

your siblings and yourself in social class). When the unit of analysis is the society as a whole, it is called structural mobility.

Intergenerational mobility
"Inter" means "between," as in international or interracial. So intergenerational mobility means the difference in social class *between* generations. When individuals born in lower class families go up to middle class in adult, it is called upward intergenerational mobility. Conversely, individuals born in middle class families go down to lower class, it is called downward intergenerational mobility. Think about yourself. Which direction are you taking?

Intragenerational mobility
"Intra" means "within." It's not easy to find words attached to "intra." But what about this? *Intra*state highways run only within a state, for example, while interstate highways run between states. Does this clarify the term...? Anyway. Intragenerational mobility happens, if ever, within a generation, such as brothers or sisters born in the same families. Assume you were born in a middle class family, and you have a brother. When your brother stays in middle class, and you go down to lower class in adult, it's called downward intragenerational mobility. You don't like this example?

Structural mobility
So far, the unit of analysis was the individual, who goes up or down. Structural mobility is about the society as a whole going up or down. Because of the Great Depression, for example, the standard of living for most Americans went down in the 1930s, which can be considered downward structural mobility. Owing to the government intervention to this on the federal level called the New Deal policy, however, the U.S. economy began recovering. This was followed by World War II, owing to which the U.S. economy became unprecedentedly vigorous, which can be considered upward structural mobility.

Class Traits

Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical customs, values, and norms that are shared in each social class. People in the same social class,

indeed, act, talk, shop, eat, etc. somewhat in similar ways. They watch similar TV programs, read similar magazines, have knowledge about politics on similar levels. When you observe what people do and how they think, you can make, to some extent, a good guess about their social class. That is why such customs, values, and norms are called class traits, or class markers. By these, class is marked on people.

Yes, consumption is included in class traits, but your focus should be placed not on money or affordability, but on lifestyle, values, and so on. Research indicates, in terms of consumption indeed, class traits are better predictors than money alone in areas that do not involve high dollar expenditures, but reflect an underlying lifestyle, values (such as concern with health), and so on (Mihić et al. 2006, p. 80; paraphrased).

Other than consumption, for sure, class traits can be observed in various ways. For example, lower-class people are more likely than middle-class people to support spanking in raising kids. Or, lower-class people are less likely than middle-class people to vote. These are about customs, values, and norms in relation to social class, not relevant to money or affordability.

Summary

There are three main classes in the United States: upper, middle, and lower class. Social mobility describes a shift from one social class to another. Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical customs, values, and norms that are shared in each social class.

Further Research

PBS made a documentary about social class called “People Like Us: Social Class in America.” The filmmakers interviewed people who lived in Park Avenue penthouses and Appalachian trailer parks. The accompanying web site is full of information, interactive games, and life stories from those who participated. Read about it at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/social_class_in_America

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Glossary

class traits
: the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class (also called class markers)

downward mobility
: a lowering of one's social class

intergenerational mobility
: a difference in social class between different generations of a family

intragenerational mobility
: a difference in social class between different members of the same generation

social mobility
: the ability to change positions within a social stratification system

standard of living
: the level of wealth available to acquire material goods and comforts to maintain a particular socioeconomic lifestyle

structural mobility
: a societal change that enables a whole group of people to move up or down the class ladder

upward mobility
: an increase—or upward shift—in social class

Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

- Understand and apply functionalist, conflict theory, and interactionist perspectives on social stratification

Basketball is one of the highest-paying professional sports. There is stratification even among teams. For example, the Minnesota Timberwolves hand out the lowest annual payroll, while the Los Angeles Lakers reportedly pay the highest. Kobe Bryant, a Lakers shooting guard, is one of the highest paid athletes in the NBA, earning around $30.5 million a year (Forbes 2014). Even within specific fields, layers are stratified and members are ranked.

In sociology, even an issue such as NBA salaries can be seen from various points of view. Functionalists will examine the purpose of such high salaries, while conflict theorists will study the exorbitant salaries as an unfair distribution of money. Social stratification takes on new meanings when it is examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalism

Functionalists examine how society's parts operate for the sake of the whole. According to functionalism, different aspects of society exist because they serve a needed purpose. What is the function of social stratification?

In 1945, sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore published the **Davis-Moore thesis**, which argued that the greater the functional importance of a social role, the greater must be the reward. The theory posits that social stratification represents the inherently unequal value of different work. Certain tasks in society are more valuable than others. Qualified people who fill those positions must be rewarded more than others. In short, that is, the contribution you make to your society should be equal to the reward you can get; the greater your contribution, the greater your reward. Really?

In 1953, Melvin Tumin countered the Davis-Moore thesis in “Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis.” He pointed out that the thesis neglected to see that due to our own social locations, such as race or gender, we may not have, at the onset, equal chances to contribute to the society. Social stratification prevents people from attempting to fill roles (Tumin 1953). Indeed, an underprivileged youth has less chance of becoming a scientist, no matter how smart she is, because of the relative lack of opportunity available to her. The Davis-Moore thesis also neglected to see that while giant corporations' CEOs (such as Jeff Bezos) make billions by cutting their workers' wages rather than by contributing to the society, school teachers or nurses don't get paid much although they do very important jobs for the society. The greater your contribution, the greater your reward? Uh-oh...

The Davis-Moore thesis, though open for debate, was an early attempt to explain why stratification exists. The thesis states that social stratification is necessary to promote excellence, productivity, and efficiency, thus giving people something to strive for. Davis and Moore believed that the system serves society as a whole because it allows everyone to benefit to a certain extent. Alas...

Conflict Theory

These people are protesting a decision made

by Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee, to lay off custodians and outsource the jobs to a private firm to avoid paying employee benefits. Private job agencies often pay lower hourly wages. Is the decision fair? (Photo courtesy of Brian Stansberry/Wikimedia Commons)

Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists are critical of social stratification, asserting that it benefits only a small number of powerful people, not all of society. For instance, to a conflict theorist, it seems wrong that a basketball player is paid millions for an annual contract while a public school teacher earns $35,000 a year. Stratification, conflict theorists believe, perpetuates inequality. Conflict theorists try to bring awareness to inequalities, such as how a rich society can have so many poor people.

Many conflict theorists draw on the work of Karl Marx. During the nineteenth-century era of industrialization, Marx believed social stratification resulted from people’s relationship to production. People were divided by a single line: those who owned factories (bourgeoisie) and those who worked in them (proletariat). In Marx’s time, bourgeoisie owned the "means of production," or anything that can make money, such as factories, machines, buildings, and land, as they still do today. Ordinary people (proletariat) were heavily exploited for cheap wages. Marx saw workers experience deep alienation, isolation, and misery resulting from powerless status levels (Marx 1848).

Today, the strained working relationship between employers and employees still remains. The capitalist golden rules is this: the lower the wages, the higher the profits. This powerful system makes capitalists richer and, on the other hand, keeps workers poor, or even poorer.

In an interview, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez makes this tendency deadly clear. The news article was titled "Jeff Bezos Is a Billionaire for Paying Amazon Workers ‘Starvation Wages’" (CNSNews 2019). Ocasio-Cortez

said she was concerned that Bezos' "being a billionaire is predicated on paying people starvation wages and stripping them of their ability to access health care, and also if his ability to be a billionaire is predicated on the fact that his workers are taking food stamps." After being forced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, though, Jeff Bezos decided to raise its minimum wage to $15 an hour.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a paradigm that observes and analyzes everyday interactions of individuals. Symbolic interactionism, therefore, examines stratification from a micro-level perspective. This analysis focuses on how people's social standing affects their everyday interactions.

In most communities, people interact primarily with others who share the same social standing. It is precisely because of social stratification that people tend to live, work, and associate with others like themselves, people who share their same income level, educational background, or racial background, and even tastes in food, music, and clothing. The built-in system of social stratification groups people together. This is one of the reasons why it was rare for a royal prince like England's Prince William to marry a commoner.

Symbolic interactionists also note that people's appearance reflects their perceived social standing. Housing, clothing, and transportation indicate social status, as do hairstyles, taste in accessories, and personal style.

(a) A group of construction workers on the job site, and (b) a group of businessmen. What categories of stratification do these construction workers share? How do construction workers differ from executives or custodians? Who is more skilled? Who has greater prestige in society? (Photo (a) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Chun Kit/flickr)

To symbolically display their social standing, people often engage in **conspicuous consumption**, the purchase of more expensive goods/services than necessary. Items people buy and use--such as jackets, shoes, backpacks, and so on--can show what they themselves are like. In order to show off, hence, they spend more money especially for things others can see, although cheaper ones may not differ much from such items in terms of functions. For example, people, especially youths (such as you), choose items by brand names, which are way more expensive than their imitations, such as Nike (not Mike), Adidas (not Abibas), Converse (not Converce), and so on. Old Navy is okay, but Old Navi is out. Why? That's because it's not cool, but unbearably embarrassing! This powerful social psychological phenomenon drives people toward conspicuous consumption. Some elderly, such as the professor of your sociology course, don't even care, though.

Summary

Social stratification can be examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. The functionalist perspective states that systems exist in society for good reasons. Conflict theorists observe that stratification promotes inequality, such as between rich business owners and poor workers. Symbolic interactionists examine stratification from a micro-level perspective. They observe how social standing affects people's everyday interactions and how the concept of "social class" is constructed and maintained through everyday interactions.

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Glossary

conspicuous consumption
: the act of buying and using products to make a statement about social standing

Davis-Moore thesis
: a thesis that argues some social stratification is a social necessity

Introduction to Global Inequality class="introduction"

Contemporary economic development often follows a similar pattern around the world, best described as a growing gap between the have and have-nots. (Photo courtesy of Alicia Nijdam/Wikimedia Commons)

The April 24, 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza in Dhaka, Bangladesh that killed over 1,100 people, was the deadliest garment factory accident in history, and it was preventable (International Labour Organization, Department of Communication 2014).

In addition to garment factories employing about 5,000 people, the building contained a bank, apartments, childcare facilities, and a variety of shops. Many of these closed the day before the collapse when cracks were discovered in the building walls. When some of the garment workers refused to enter the building, they were threatened with the loss of a month’s pay. Most were young women, aged twenty or younger. They typically worked over thirteen hours a day, with two days off each month. For this work, they took home between twelve and twenty-two cents an hour, or $10.56 to $12.48 a week. Without that pay, most would have been unable to feed their children. In contrast, the U.S. federal minimum wage is $7.25 an hour, and workers receive wages at time-and-a-half rates for work in excess of forty hours a week.

Did you buy clothes from Walmart in 2012? What about at The Children’s Place? Did you ever think about where those clothes came from? Of the outsourced garments made in the garment factories, thirty-two were intended for U.S, Canadian, and European stores. In the aftermath of the collapse, it was revealed that Walmart jeans were made in the Ether Tex garment factory on the fifth floor of the Rana Plaza building, while 120,000 pounds of clothing for The Children’s Place were produced in the New Wave Style Factory, also located in the building. Afterward, Walmart and The Children’s Place pledged $1 million and $450,000 (respectively) to the Rana Plaza Trust Fund, but fifteen other companies with clothing made in the building have contributed nothing, including U.S. companies Cato and J.C. Penney (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights 2014).

While you read this chapter, think about the global system that allows U.S. companies to outsource their manufacturing to peripheral nations, where many women and children work in conditions that some characterize as slave labor. Do people in the United States have a responsibility to foreign workers? Should U.S. corporations be held accountable for what happens to

garment factory workers who make their clothing? What can you do as a consumer to help such workers?

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Global Stratification and Classification

- Describe global stratification
- Understand how different classification systems have developed
- Use terminology from Wallerstein's world systems approach
- Explain the World Bank's classification of economies

Just as the United States' wealth is increasingly concentrated among its richest citizens while the middle class slowly disappears, **global inequality** is concentrating resources in certain nations and is significantly affecting the opportunities of individuals in poorer and less powerful countries. In fact, a recent Oxfam (2014) reports that suggested the richest 85 individuals in the world are worth more than the poorest 3.5 billion people combined. The **GINI coefficient** measures income inequality between countries using a 100-point scale on which 1 represents complete equality and 100 represents the highest possible inequality. In 2007, the global GINI coefficient of the wealth gap between the core nations in the northern part of the world and the mostly peripheral nations in the southern part of the world was 75.5 percent (Korseniewicz and Moran 2009). But before we delve into the complexities of global inequality, let's consider how the three major sociological perspectives might contribute to our understanding of it.

The functionalist perspective is a macroanalytical view that focuses on the way that all aspects of society are integral to the continued health and viability of the whole. A functionalist might focus on why we have global inequality and what social purposes it serves. This view might assert, for example, that we have global inequality because some nations are better than others at adapting to new technologies and profiting from a globalized economy, and that poor nations are getting a lot of benefits in many ways, such as the great expansion of job opportunities, the introduction of new technologies and machines, and the knowledge of highly advanced business models.

Conflict theory focuses on the creation, expansion, and reproduction of inequality. A conflict theorist would likely address the systematic inequality created when rich nations exploit poor nations' resources, such as oil, agricultural products, and cheap labor. Under such circumstances, natural environments of poor nations are endangered, and so are social

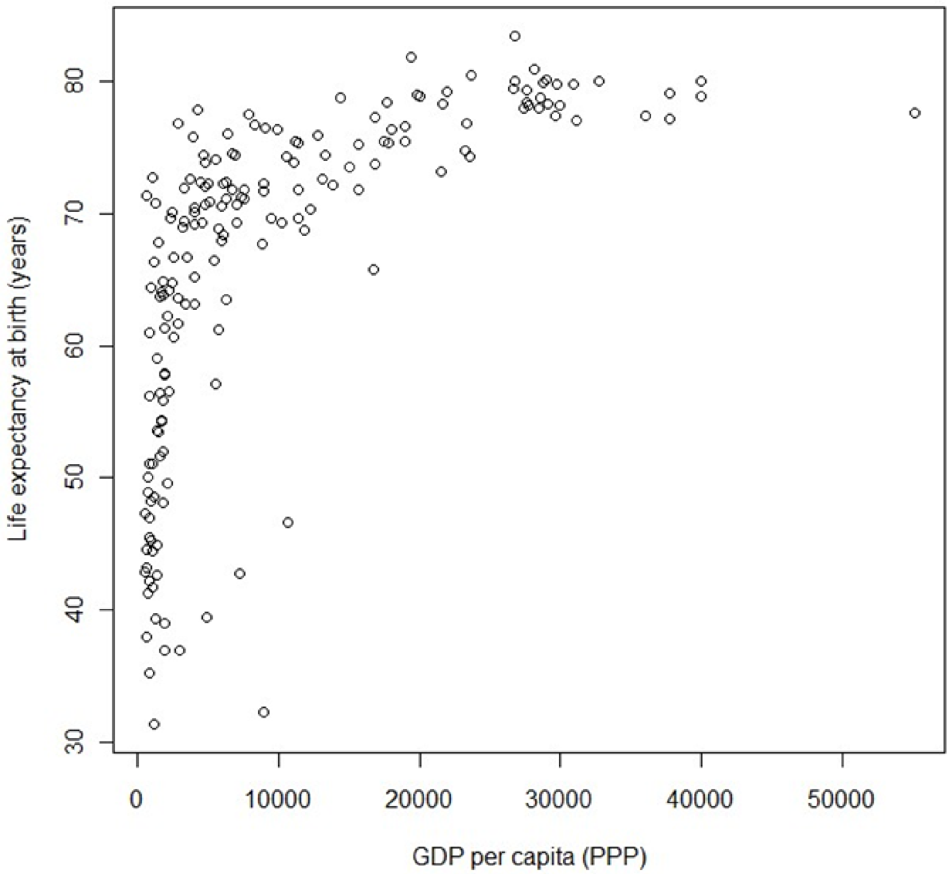
environments, such as traditionally long perpetuated indigenous ways of collective living. As the land of these nations is cemented, formerly rural farmers who now work in factories have no way to go back to their previous living. What if the factories are closed for whatever the reason?

The symbolic interaction perspective studies the day-to-day impact of global inequality, the meanings individuals attach to global stratification, and the subjective nature of poverty. Someone applying this view to global inequality would probably focus on understanding the difference between what someone living in a core nation defines as poverty (relative poverty, defined as being unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country) and what someone living in a peripheral nation defines as poverty (absolute poverty, defined as being barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities, such as food).

Global Stratification

While stratification in the United States refers to the unequal distribution of resources among individuals, **global stratification** refers to this unequal distribution among nations. There are two dimensions to this stratification: gaps between nations and gaps within nations. When it comes to global inequality, both economic inequality and social inequality may concentrate the burden of poverty among certain segments of the earth's population (Myrdal 1970). As shown below, people's life expectancy depends heavily on where they happen to be born.

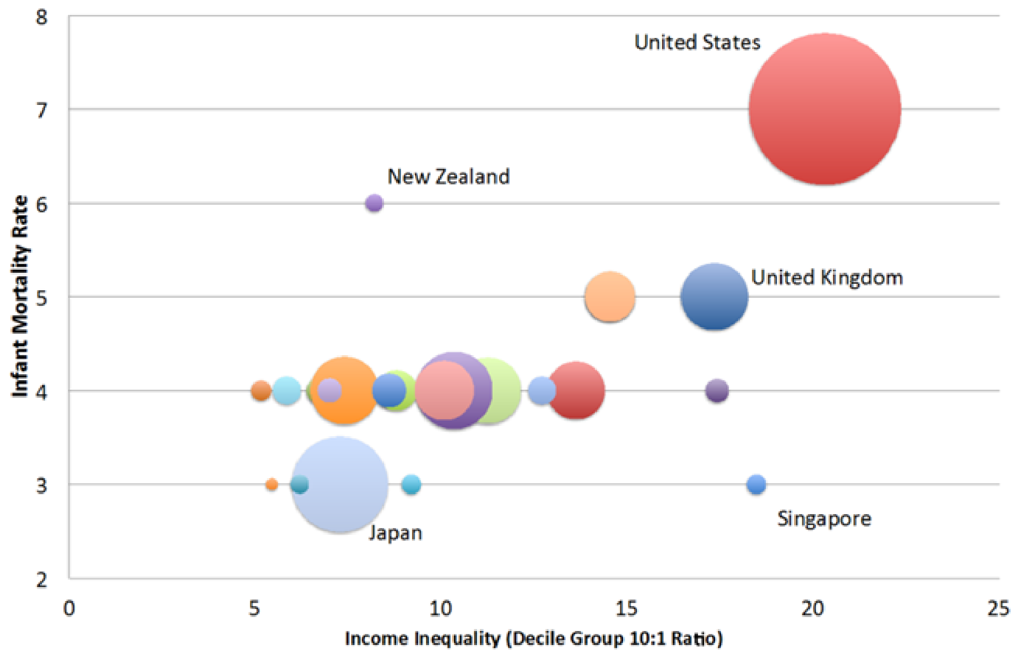
GDP per Capita and Life Expectancy



Source: CIA Factbook (2003).

There is a positive relationship between the **GDP per capita and life expectancy**. It is positive because the two variables face the same direction, that is, *the richer* the nation, *the longer* its people's life expectancy tends to be. In the image above ("GDP per Capita and Life Expectancy"), the X axis (the horizontal line placed at the bottom) represents GDP per capita. The Y axis (the vertical line on the left) represents life expectancy. When the GDP per capita exceeds $20,000, life expectancy can exceed 80 years. Below $10,000, life expectancy ranges between 31.3 years (Mozambique) and 76.4 years (Chile). The highest GDP per capita (see the upper right) is not the U.S. ($37,800), but Luxembourg ($55,100). As discussed earlier, the value is the mean average based on the GDP, and average income is obtained not by the mean, which is biased, but by the median, the mid-value in a data set that cannot be affected by the highest value (such as Bill Gates) or the lowest value.

Income Inequality and Infant Mortality Rate



Source: Cost of Living (2015).

There is also a positive relationship between **income inequality and infant mortality rate** (the number of babies who die early out of 1,000 newborn babies). That is, the more unequal the income distribution within a nation, the higher its infant mortality rate tends to be. In the image above, the X axis represents "income inequality" and the Y axis, "infant mortality rate." The size of circles shows the size of the GDP; the U.S. (placed on the upper right) is the largest. In terms of income inequality, though, the U.S. is the worst among the countries included in the data. In terms of infant mortality rate, the U.S. is the worst, as well. Except Singapore (lower right) and New Zealand (upper left), the positive relationship between income inequality and infant mortality rate is clearly seen.

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of global stratification as economic inequality. Social inequality, however, is just as harmful as economic discrepancies. Prejudice and discrimination—whether against a certain race, ethnicity, religion, or the like—can create and aggravate conditions of economic equality, both within and between nations. Think about the inequity that existed for decades within the nation of South Africa. Apartheid, one of the worst cases of institutionalized and legal racism, created a social inequality that gathered the world’s condemnation.

Gender inequity is another global concern. Consider the controversy surrounding female genital mutilation (the removal of the clitoris from newborn baby girls practiced mostly by their family members). Nations that practice this female circumcision procedure, supported by cultural relativists, defend it as a longstanding cultural tradition in certain tribes and argue that the West shouldn’t interfere. Western nations, however, decry the practice and are working to stop it.

Inequalities based on sexual orientation and gender identity exist around the globe. According to Amnesty International, a number of crimes are committed against individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles or sexual orientations. From culturally sanctioned rape to state-sanctioned executions, the abuses are serious. These legalized and culturally accepted forms of prejudice and discrimination exist everywhere—from the United States to Somalia to Tibet—restricting the freedom of individuals and often putting their lives at risk (Amnesty International 2012).

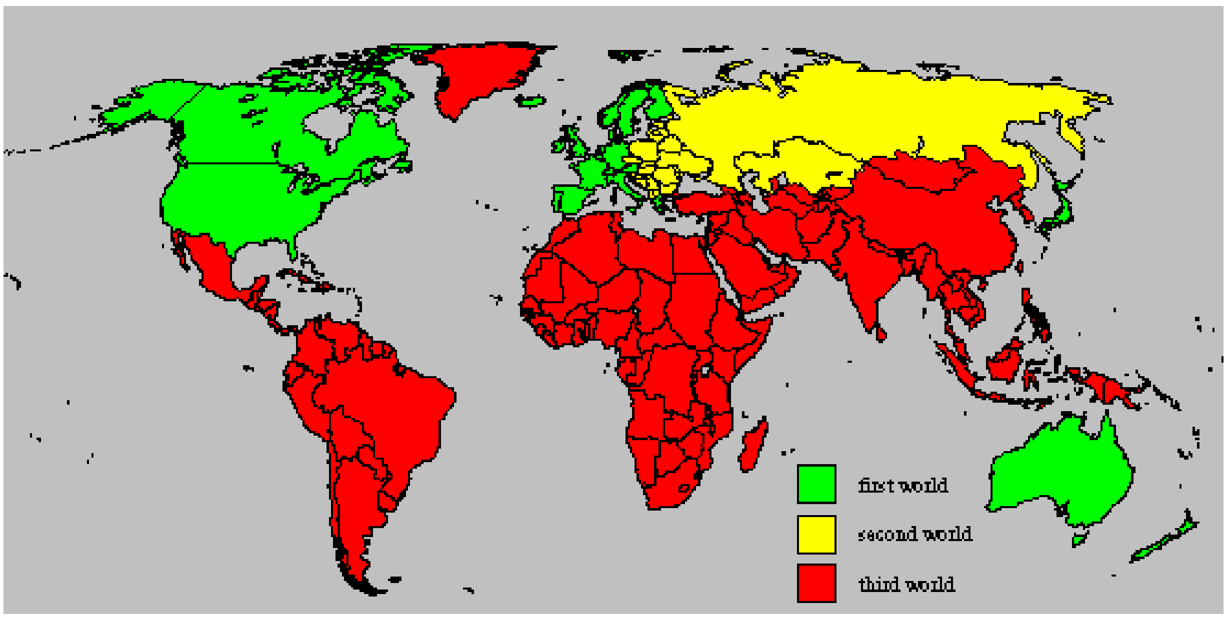
Global Classification

A major concern when discussing global inequality is how to avoid an ethnocentric bias mistakenly assuming that less industrialized nations struggle to become more industrialized ones, like the United States. Terms such as developing (nonindustrialized) and developed (industrialized) sound like the labels judging the countries as inferior/superior. Over time, however, terminology has shifted to make way for a more inclusive view of the world.

Cold War Terminology

Cold War terminology was developed during the Cold War era (1947-1991) that started right after World War II and ended for the collapse of the Soviet Union. It classifies countries into first world, second world, and third world nations. Capitalistic democracies led by the United States were considered the **first world**, including Western Europe and Japan. This is why the first world is also called the "Western Bloc"--although Japan is not

geographically located in the west. The **second world** was led by the Soviet Union and followed the communist ideology, including Eastern Europe. The second world is also called the "Eastern Bloc." China initially followed the Soviet Union as its "big brother," but, viewing the new world situation a quite different way, soon it declared that all other poor nations, which had been previously colonized and exploited by European countries and/or by the U.S., should unite into the **third world** that would be no longer ruled by the U.S. (the first world) or by the Soviet Union (the second world) (see, e.g., Saba 1980).



Immanuel Wallerstein: World Systems Approach

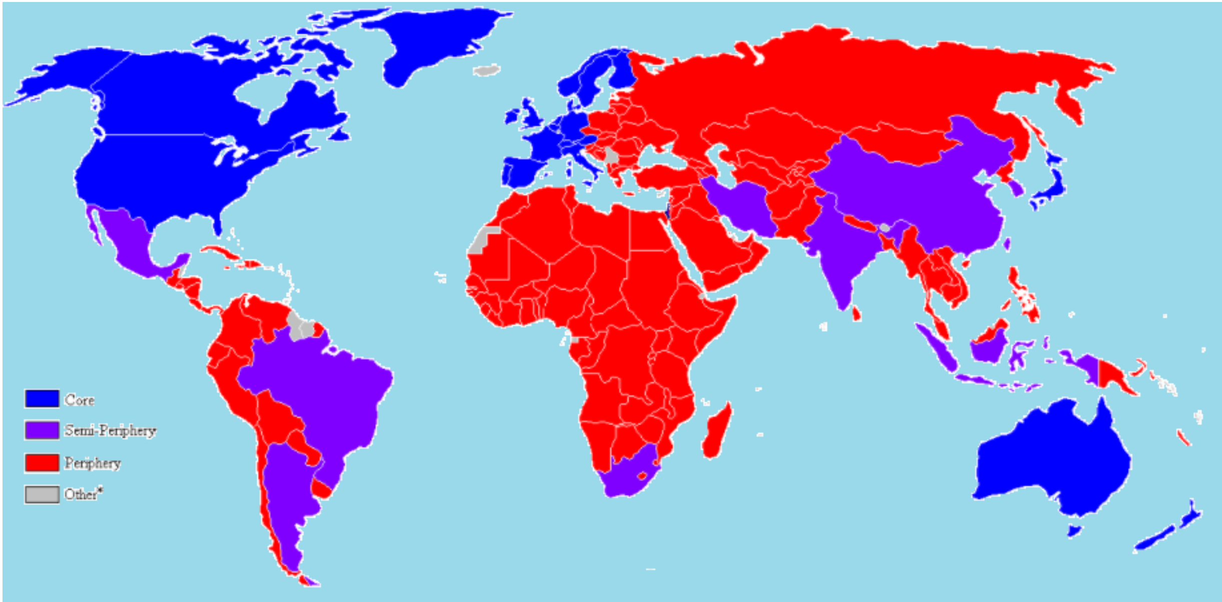
Immanuel Wallerstein's (1979) world systems approach is based on the economic (rather than political) standing of nations. It views the world situation as economically hierarchical, consisting of core nations (the richest), peripheral nations (the poorest), and semi-peripheral nations (in-between).

Core nations are dominant capitalist countries, highly industrialized, technological, and urbanized, almost identical with what the Cold War terminology calls the first world (compare the map shown above and that below). Core nations, especially the U.S., act as an economic powerhouse

exerting control over every aspect of the global economy and exploiting both semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. Free trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), can be seen as an example of how a core nation is able to leverage its power to gain the most advantageous position in the matter of global trade.

Peripheral nations are the least advanced ones, both economically and politically. All of them were previously colonized by European countries, the U.S., and/or Japan, and thus, are somewhat identical with the third world. Although at some point in history--mostly after WWII--they got independence, what's going on currently in these countries can be seen as neocolonialism, not much different from colonialism (which will be discussed in Ch. 17, Government and Politics). They thus tend to be placed under domination by core nations through puppet regimes--the situation which is called neocolonialism--and are politically unstable or even chaotic.

Semi-peripheral nations are in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but nevertheless acting as important sources for raw material and an expanding middle-class marketplace for core nations, while also exploiting peripheral nations. They were previously the third world, but grew economically, and are now placed between core nations and peripheral nations. Mexico is an example, providing abundant cheap labor to multinational corporations headquartered in the U.S., and such corporations import their own goods from Mexico to the U.S. with no tariff (import tax) thanks to the free trade agreement (NAFTA). To the extent they cut the wage cost, they make more profit, one of the major business strategies seen in neocolonialism.



High-Income Nations

The World Bank defines high-income nations as having a gross national income of at least $12,746 per capita. The OECD (Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development) countries make up a group of 34 economically advanced nations whose governments work together to promote economic growth and sustainability. According to the World Bank (2014b), in 2013, the average **gross domestic product (GDP) per capita** (see Ch. 8, Social Stratification in the U.S.) of the OECD countries was $37,311, and the total population was over one billion (1.045 billion); on average, 81% of the population in these nations was urban.

High-income countries face two major issues: capital flight and deindustrialization. They are related to neocolonialism and problematic to core nation workers, because of which they loose their jobs. **Capital flight** refers to the movement (flight) of capital (business money) from one nation to another, as when General Motors automotive company closed U.S. factories in Michigan and opened factories in Mexico. **Deindustrialization**, a related issue, occurs as a consequence of capital flight, as no new companies open to replace jobs lost to foreign nations. As expected, global companies move their industrial processes to the places where they can get the most production with the least cost, including the building of

infrastructure, training of workers, shipping of goods, and, of course, paying employee wages.

Note:
Capital Flight, Outsourcing, and Jobs in the United States

This dilapidated auto supply store in Detroit is a victim of auto industry outsourcing. (Photo courtesy of Bob Jagendorf/flickr)

Capital flight describes jobs and infrastructure moving from one nation to another. Look at the U.S. automobile industry. In the early twentieth century, the cars driven in the United States were made here, employing thousands of workers in Detroit and in the companies that produced everything that made building cars possible. However, once the fuel crisis of the 1970s hit and people in the United States increasingly looked to imported cars with better gas mileage, U.S. auto manufacturing began to decline. During the 2007–2009 recession, the U.S. government bailed out the three main auto companies, underscoring their vulnerability. At the same time, Japanese-owned Toyota and Honda and South Korean Kia maintained stable sales levels.

Capital flight also occurs when services (as opposed to manufacturing) are relocated. Chances are if you have called the tech support line for your cell

phone or Internet provider, you’ve spoken to someone halfway across the globe. This professional might tell you her name is Susan or Joan, but her accent makes it clear that her real name might be Parvati or Indira. It might be the middle of the night in that country, yet these service providers pick up the line saying, “Good morning,” as though they are in the next town over. They know everything about your phone or your modem, often using a remote server to log in to your home computer to accomplish what is needed. These are the workers of the twenty-first century. They are not on factory floors or in traditional sweatshops; they are educated, speak at least two languages, and usually have significant technology skills. They are skilled workers, but they are paid a fraction of what similar workers are paid in the United States. For U.S. and multinational companies, the equation makes sense. India and other semi-peripheral countries have emerging infrastructures and education systems to fill their needs, without core nation costs.

As services are relocated, so are jobs. In the United States, unemployment is high. Many college-educated people are unable to find work, and those with only a high school diploma are in even worse shape. We have, as a country, outsourced ourselves out of jobs, and not just menial jobs, but white-collar work as well. But before we complain too bitterly, we must look at the culture of consumerism that we embrace. A flat screen television that might have cost $1,000 a few years ago is now $350. That cost savings has to come from somewhere. When consumers seek the lowest possible price, shop at big box stores for the biggest discount they can get, and generally ignore other factors in exchange for low cost, they are building the market for outsourcing. And as the demand is built, the market will ensure it is met, even at the expense of the people who wanted it in the first place.

Is this international call center the wave of the future? (Photo courtesy of Vilma.com/flickr)

Middle-Income Nations

The World Bank defines middle-income economies areas those with a GNI per capita of more than $1,045 but less than $12,746. According to the World Bank (2014), in 2013, the average GNI per capita of an upper middle income nation was $7,594 per capita with a total population of 2.049 billion, of which 62 percent was urban. Thailand, China, and Namibia are examples of middle-income nations (World Bank 2014a).

Perhaps the most pressing issue for middle-income nations is the problem of debt accumulation. As the name suggests, **debt accumulation** is the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals. As the uncertainties of the global economy make repaying these debts, or even paying the interest on them, more challenging, nations can find themselves in trouble. Once global markets have reduced the value of a country's goods, it can be very difficult to ever manage the debt burden. Such issues have plagued middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as East Asian and Pacific nations (Dogruel and Dogruel 2007). By way of example, even in

the European Union, which is composed of more core nations than semi-peripheral nations, the semi-peripheral nations of Italy and Greece face increasing debt burdens. The economic downturns in both Greece and Italy still threaten the economy of the entire European Union.

Low-Income Nations

The World Bank defines low-income countries as nations whose per capita GNI was $1,045 per capita or less in 2013. According to the World Bank (2014a), in 2013, the average per capita GNI of a low-income nation was $528 per capita and the total population was 796,261,360, with 28 percent located in urban areas. For example, Myanmar, Ethiopia, and Somalia are considered low-income countries. Low-income economies are primarily found in Asia and Africa (World Bank 2014a), where most of the world's population lives. There are two major challenges that these countries face: women are disproportionately affected by poverty (in a trend toward a global feminization of poverty) and much of the population lives in absolute poverty.

Summary

Stratification refers to the gaps in resources both between nations and within nations. While economic equality is of great concern, so is social equality, like the discrimination stemming from race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and/or sexual orientation. While global inequality is nothing new, several factors make it more relevant than ever, like the global marketplace and the pace of information sharing. Researchers try to understand global inequality by classifying it according to factors such as how industrialized a nation is, whether a country serves as a means of production or as an owner, and what income a nation produces.

Further Research

To learn more about the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, look here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/UN_development_goals

To learn more about the existence and impact of global poverty, peruse the data here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/poverty_data

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Glossary

capital flight
: the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, via jobs and resources

core nations
: dominant capitalist countries

debt accumulation
: the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals

deindustrialization
: the loss of industrial production, usually to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations where the costs are lower

first world
: a term from the Cold War era that is used to describe industrialized capitalist democracies

fourth world
: a term that describes stigmatized minority groups who have no voice or representation on the world stage

GINI coefficient
: a measure of income inequality between countries using a 100-point scale, in which 1 represents complete equality and 100 represents the highest possible inequality

global inequality
: the concentration of resources in core nations and in the hands of a wealthy minority

global feminization of poverty
: a pattern that occurs when women bear a disproportionate percentage of the burden of poverty

global stratification
: the unequal distribution of resources between countries

gross national income (GNI)
: the income of a nation calculated based on goods and services produced, plus income earned by citizens and corporations headquartered in that country

peripheral nations
: nations on the fringes of the global economy, dominated by core nations, with very little industrialization

second world
: a term from the Cold War era that describes nations with moderate economies and standards of living

semi-peripheral nations
: in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but acting as a major source of raw materials and an expanding middle class marketplace

third world

a term from the Cold War era that refers to poor, unindustrialized countries

Global Wealth and Poverty

- Understand the differences between relative, absolute, and subjective poverty
- Describe the economic situation of some of the world’s most impoverished areas
- Explain the cyclical impact of the consequences of poverty

How poor is poor for these beggar children in Vietnam? (Photo courtesy of Augapfel/flickr)

Poverty

Roughly saying, there are two types of poverty: relative poverty and absolute poverty. **Relative poverty** is a state of living where people can afford necessities but are unable to meet their society’s average standard of living. People often disparage “keeping up with the Joneses”—the idea that you must keep up with the neighbors’ standard of living to not feel deprived. But it is true that you might feel ”poor” if you are living without a car to drive to and from work, without any money for a safety net should a family member fall ill, and without any “extras” beyond just making ends meet.

Absolute poverty is the condition in which the basic needs cannot be met, the basic needs including food, clean water, safe housing, and access to healthcare. Currently, about 17% of people in peripheral nations are dipped in absolute poverty. In the U.S., one of the richest countries in the world? It's between 12% and 15%...(see below)

War on Poverty in the U.S.

In the 1960s, when President Johnson declared “war on poverty,” the U.S. government began defining “poverty” based on “total annual income for a family of four below which basic needs cannot be met.” The poverty line (or “poverty threshold”) for 2016 was set at $24,563 (The U.S. Census Bureau 2016). Since the 1960s, the poverty rates ranged between 12% and 15% of the population, or between 36 million and 45 million people, a larger number than the entire population of the poorest countries in the world, such as Zimbabwe (14.15 million), Burundi (10.16 million), and Liberia (4 million). Hence, saying that the United States is a rich country is misleading. The gap between the rich and the poor is too big.

Slums in India illustrate absolute poverty all too well. (Photo courtesy of Emmanuelle Dyan/flickr)

Note:

The Underground Economy Around the World

What do the driver of an unlicensed hack cab in New York, a piecework seamstress working from her home in Mumbai, and a street tortilla vendor in Mexico City have in common? They are all members of the **underground economy**, a loosely defined unregulated market unhindered by taxes, government permits, or human protections. Official statistics before the worldwide recession posit that the underground economy accounted for over 50 percent of nonagricultural work in Latin America; the figure went as high as 80 percent in parts of Asia and Africa (Chen 2001). A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* discusses the challenges, parameters, and surprising benefits of this informal marketplace. The wages earned in most underground economy jobs, especially in peripheral nations, are a pittance—a few rupees for a handmade bracelet at a market, or maybe 250 rupees ($5 U.S.) for a day’s worth of fruit and vegetable sales (Barta 2009). But these tiny sums mark the difference between survival and extinction for the world’s poor.

The underground economy has never been viewed very positively by global economists. After all, its members don’t pay taxes, don’t take out loans to grow their businesses, and rarely earn enough to put money back into the economy in the form of consumer spending. But according to the International Labor Organization (an agency of the United Nations), some 52 million people worldwide will lose their jobs due to the ongoing worldwide recession. And while those in core nations know that high unemployment rates and limited government safety nets can be frightening, their situation is nothing compared to the loss of a job for those barely eking out an existence. Once that job disappears, the chance of staying afloat is very slim.

Within the context of this recession, some see the underground economy as a key player in keeping people alive. Indeed, an economist at the World Bank credits jobs created by the informal economy as a primary reason why peripheral nations are not in worse shape during this recession. Women in particular benefit from the informal sector. The majority of economically active women in peripheral nations are engaged in the informal sector, which is somewhat buffered from the economic downturn. The flip side, of course, is that it is equally buffered from the possibility of economic growth.

Even in the United States, the informal economy exists, although not on the same scale as in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. It might include under-the-table nannies, gardeners, and housecleaners, as well as unlicensed street vendors and taxi drivers. There are also those who run informal businesses, like daycares or salons, from their houses. Analysts estimate that this type of labor may make up 10 percent of the overall U.S. economy, a number that will likely grow as companies reduce head counts, leaving more workers to seek other options. In the end, the article suggests that, whether selling medicinal wines in Thailand or woven bracelets in India, the workers of the underground economy at least have what most people want most of all: a chance to stay afloat (Barta 2009).

Who Are the Impoverished?

Who are the impoverished? Who is living in absolute poverty? The truth that most of us would guess that the richest countries are often those with the least people. Compare the United States, which possesses a relatively small slice of the population pie and owns by far the largest slice of the wealth pie, with India. These disparities have the expected consequence. The poorest people in the world are women and those in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. For women, the rate of poverty is particularly worsened by the pressure on their time. In general, time is one of the few luxuries the very poor have, but study after study has shown that women in poverty, who are responsible for all family comforts as well as any earnings they can make, have less of it. The result is that while men and women may have the same rate of economic poverty, women are suffering more in terms of overall wellbeing (Buvinic 1997). It is harder for females to get credit to expand businesses, to take the time to learn a new skill, or to spend extra hours improving their craft so as to be able to earn at a higher rate.

Global Feminization of Poverty

In some ways, the phrase "global feminization of poverty" says it all: around the world, women are bearing a disproportionate percentage of the

burden of poverty. This means more women live in poor conditions, receive inadequate healthcare, bear the brunt of malnutrition and inadequate drinking water, and so on. Throughout the 1990s, data indicated that while overall poverty rates were rising, especially in peripheral nations, the rates of impoverishment increased for women nearly 20 percent more than for men (Mogadham 2005).

While women are living longer and healthier lives today compared to ten years ago, around the world many women are denied basic rights, particularly in the workplace. In peripheral nations, they accumulate fewer assets, farm less land, make less money, and face restricted civil rights and liberties. Women can stimulate the economic growth of peripheral nations, but they are often undereducated and lack access to credit needed to start small businesses.

In 2013, the United Nations assessed its progress toward achieving its Millennium Development Goals. Goal 3 was to promote gender equality and empower women, and there were encouraging advances in this area. While women's employment outside the agricultural sector remains under 20 percent in Western Asia, Northern Africa, and Southern Asia, worldwide it increased from 35–40 percent over the twenty-year period ending in 2010 (United Nations 2013).

Africa

The majority of the poorest countries in the world are in Africa. That is not to say there is not diversity within the countries of that continent; countries like South Africa and Egypt have much lower rates of poverty than Angola and Ethiopia, for instance. Overall, African income levels have been dropping relative to the rest of the world, meaning that Africa as a whole is getting relatively poorer. Making the problem worse, 2014 saw an outbreak of the *Ebola* virus in western Africa, leading to a public health crisis and an economic downturn due to loss of workers and tourist dollars.

Why is Africa in such dire straits? Much of the continent's poverty can be traced to the availability of land, especially arable land (land that can be

farmed). Centuries of struggle over land ownership have meant that much useable land has been ruined or left unfarmed, while many countries with inadequate rainfall have never set up an infrastructure to irrigate. Many of Africa's natural resources were long ago taken by colonial forces, leaving little agricultural and mineral wealth on the continent.

Further, African poverty is worsened by civil wars and inadequate governance that are the result of a continent re-imagined with artificial colonial borders and leaders. Consider the example of Rwanda. There, two ethnic groups cohabitated with their own system of hierarchy and management until Belgians took control of the country in 1915 and rigidly confined members of the population into two unequal ethnic groups. While, historically, members of the Tutsi group held positions of power, the involvement of Belgians led to the Hutu's seizing power during a 1960s revolt. This ultimately led to a repressive government and genocide against Tutsis that left hundreds of thousands of Rwandans dead or living in diaspora (U.S. Department of State 2011c). The painful rebirth of a self-ruled Africa has meant many countries bear ongoing scars as they try to see their way towards the future (World Poverty 2012a).

Asia

While the majority of the world's poorest countries are in Africa, the majority of the world's poorest people are in Asia. As in Africa, Asia finds itself with disparity in the distribution of poverty, with Japan and South Korea holding much more wealth than India and Cambodia. In fact, most poverty is concentrated in South Asia. One of the most pressing causes of poverty in Asia is simply the pressure that the size of the population puts on its resources. In fact, many believe that China's success in recent times has much to do with its draconian population control rules. According to the U.S. State department, China's market-oriented reforms have contributed to its significant reduction of poverty and the speed at which it has experienced an increase in income levels (U.S. Department of State 2011b). However, every part of Asia is feeling the current global recession, from the poorest countries whose aid packages will be hit, to the more industrialized ones whose own industries are slowing down. These factors make the

poverty on the ground unlikely to improve any time soon (World Poverty 2012b).

MENA

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) includes oil-rich countries in the Gulf, such as Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait, but also countries that are relatively resource-poor in relationship to their populations, such as Morocco and Yemen. These countries are predominately Islamic. For the last quarter-century, economic growth was slower in MENA than in other developing economies, and almost a quarter of the 300 million people who make up the population live on less than $2.00 a day (World Bank 2013).

The International Labour Organization tracks the way income inequality influences social unrest. The two regions with the highest risk of social unrest are Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East-North Africa region (International Labour Organization 2012). Increasing unemployment and high socioeconomic inequality in MENA were major factors in the Arab Spring, which—beginning in 2010—toppled dictatorships throughout the Middle East in favor of democratically elected government; unemployment and income inequalities are still being blamed on immigrants, foreign nationals, and ethnic/religious minorities.

Sweatshops

USAS—United Students Against Sweatshops--is a non-governmental organization founded in 1997 and run by U.S. students who watch what's going on in sweatshops, factories run in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by multinational corporations headquartered in core nations. They are angry and have waged countless battles against both apparel makers and other multinational corporations that do not meet what USAS considers fair working conditions and wages (USAS 2009). "Fair working conditions and wages"? See below.

Sweatshops Wages in 2003

	Hourly Wage in U.S. $
Bangladesh	$0.13
China	0.44
Costa Rica	2.38
Dominican Republic	1.62
El Salvador	1.38
Haiti	0.49
Honduras	1.31
Indonesia	0.34
Nicaragua	0.76
Vietnam	0.26

Source: Powell *et al.*(2006, p. 265)

Employees in sweatshops work for long hours at low wages and under unhealthy or even dangerous conditions. Well-known companies that run sweatshops include: H&M, Nike, Walmart, Gap, Disney, Sears, and so forth. The capitalist golden rule is: the lower the wages, the higher the profits.

	INJURY	COMPENSATION
or	Loss of a thumb, or any finger past a joint	6 months' salary
	Two fingers	10 months' salary
or	Four fingers, or a thumb and three fingers	14 months' salary and 70% pay through retirement age
or	Forearm, or both thumbs	18 months' salary and 75% pay through retirement age
or	An arm, or hand and the thumb on opposite hand	20 months' salary and 80% pay through retirement age

Source: Zhejiang Department of Labor Social Security

Yongkang, the hardware capital of China, has 7,000 factories run by giant corporations from powerful countries, such as Wal-Mart, Disney, Dell, and so on. Yongkang means "eternal health" in Chinese. As shown above ("The Price of a Finger"), it is also the dismemberment capital: there are 2,500 accidents each year and thousands more that are unreported (Wong 2005). Young migrants are hired at the train station to run metal stampers, molders,

and high-pressure hammers driven by fly- wheels. Few workers last a month.

Not just risks to health and safety, this feature of global commerce also completely disrupts indigenous activities such as rural agriculture and crafts, disassembling the village and family systems which have been essential features of the socioeconomic fabric of host countries (Baram 2009). The land, previously farmed, has been cemented for factories to run, factories which keep polluting the water, the air, and the rest of the land.

Consequences of Poverty

For this child at a refugee camp in Ethiopia, poverty and malnutrition are a way of life. (Photo courtesy of DFID - UK Department for International Development/flickr)

Not surprisingly, the consequences of poverty are often also causes. The poor often experience inadequate healthcare, limited education, and the inaccessibility of birth control. But those born into these conditions are

incredibly challenged in their efforts to break out since these consequences of poverty are also causes of poverty, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

According to sociologists Neckerman and Torche (2007) in their analysis of global inequality studies, the consequences of poverty are many. Neckerman and Torche have divided them into three areas. The first, termed “the sedimentation of global inequality,” relates to the fact that once poverty becomes entrenched in an area, it is typically very difficult to reverse. As mentioned above, poverty exists in a cycle where the consequences and causes are intertwined. The second consequence of poverty is its effect on physical and mental health. Poor people face physical health challenges, including malnutrition and high infant mortality rates. Mental health is also detrimentally affected by the emotional stresses of poverty, with relative deprivation carrying the most robust effect. Again, as with the ongoing inequality, the effects of poverty on mental and physical health become more entrenched as time goes on. Neckerman and Torche’s third consequence of poverty is the prevalence of crime. Cross-nationally, crime rates are higher, particularly for violent crime, in countries with higher levels of income inequality (Fajnzylber, Lederman, and Loayza 2002).

Slavery

Chattel slavery is a form of slavery, once practiced in the American South, in which one person owns another as property. Child slavery, which may include child prostitution, is chattel slavery. In **debt bondage**, or bonded labor, the poor pledge themselves as servants in exchange for the cost of basic necessities like transportation, room, and board. In this scenario, people are paid less than they are charged for room and board. When travel is required, they can arrive in debt for their travel expenses and be unable to work their way free, since their wages do not allow them to ever get ahead. In the nineteenth century, many Europeans unable to buy the ticket to cross the Atlantic Ocean migrated to the U.S. as "indentured servants," the same as debt bondage.

There are tens of millions of people trapped in various forms of slavery in today’s world. Of them, 78% are labor slaves and 22%, sex slaves. And of them, 26% are children (freetheslaves.net). Also, in the privatized U.S.

prisons, prisoners are treated as if they were slave laborers whose average of maximum wages are $4.73 per day (prisonpolicy.org).

The global watchdog group Anti-Slavery International recognizes other forms of slavery: human trafficking (in which people are moved away from their communities and forced to work against their will), child domestic work and child labor, and certain forms of servile marriage, in which women are little more than chattel slaves (Anti-Slavery International 2012).

Summary

When looking at the world's poor, we first have to define the difference between relative poverty, absolute poverty, and subjective poverty. While those in relative poverty might not have enough to live at their country's standard of living, those in absolute poverty do not have, or barely have, basic necessities such as food. Subjective poverty has more to do with one's perception of one's situation. North America and Europe are home to fewer of the world's poor than Africa, which has most poor countries, or Asia, which has the most people living in poverty. Poverty has numerous negative consequences, from increased crime rates to a detrimental impact on physical and mental health.

Further Research

Students often think that the United States is immune to the atrocity of human trafficking. Check out the following link to learn more about trafficking in the United States:
http://openstaxcollege.org/l/human_trafficking_in_US

For more information about the ongoing practices of slavery in the modern world click here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/anti-slavery

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Glossary

absolute poverty
: the state where one is barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities

chattel slavery
: a form of slavery in which one person owns another

debt bondage
: the act of people pledging themselves as servants in exchange for money for passage, and are subsequently paid too little to regain their freedom

relative poverty
: the state of poverty where one is unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in the country

subjective poverty
: a state of poverty composed of many dimensions, subjectively present when one’s actual income does not meet one’s expectations

underground economy
: an unregulated economy of labor and goods that operates outside of governance, regulatory systems, or human protections

Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

- Describe the modernization and dependency theory perspectives on global stratification

As with any social issue, global or otherwise, scholars have developed a variety of theories to study global stratification. The two most widely applied perspectives are modernization theory and dependency theory.

Modernization Theory

According to **modernization theory**, low-income countries are affected by their lack of industrialization and can improve their global economic standing through (Armer and Katsillis 2010):

1. an adjustment of cultural values and attitudes to work
2. industrialization and other forms of economic growth

Critics point out the inherent ethnocentric bias of this theory. It erroneously supposes all countries have the same resources and are capable of following the same path. In addition, it assumes that the goal of all countries is to be as “developed” as possible. There is no room in this theory to consider if industrialization and technology are actually the best choices for all humans to follow.

There is, of course, some basis for this assumption. Data show that core nations tend to have lower maternal and child mortality rates, longer life spans, and less absolute poverty. It is also true that in the poorest countries, millions of people die from the lack of clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, which are benefits most of us take for granted. At the same time, the issue is more complex than the numbers might suggest. Cultural equality, history, community, and local traditions are all at risk as modernization pushes into peripheral countries. The challenge, then, is to allow the benefits of modernization while maintaining a cultural sensitivity to what already exists.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory can be understood as a critical response to the Euro-centric mindset of modernization theory. It states that global inequality is primarily caused by core nations (or high-income nations) exploiting semi-peripheral and peripheral nations (or middle-income and low-income nations), which creates a cycle of dependence (Hendricks 2010). As long as peripheral nations are dependent on core nations for economic stimulus and access to a larger piece of the global economy, they will never achieve stable and consistent economic growth. Further, the theory states that since core nations, as well as the World Bank, choose which countries to make loans to, and for what they will loan funds, they are creating highly segmented labor markets that are built to benefit the dominant market countries.

Summary

Modernization theory and dependency theory are two of the most common lenses sociologists use when looking at the issues of global inequality. Modernization theory posits that countries go through evolutionary stages and that industrialization and improved technology are the keys to forward movement. Dependency theory, on the other hand, sees modernization theory as Eurocentric and patronizing. With this theory, global inequality is the result of core nations creating a cycle of dependence by exploiting resources and labor in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries.

Further Research

For more information about economic modernization, check out the Hudson Institute at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Hudson_Institute

Learn more about economic dependency at the University of Texas Inequality Project: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Texas_inequality_project

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Glossary

dependency theory
: a theory which states that global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations

modernization theory
: a theory that low-income countries can improve their global economic standing by industrialization of infrastructure and a shift in cultural attitudes towards work

Introduction to Media and Technology
class="introduction"

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are just a few examples of social media that increasingly shape how we interact with the world. (Photo courtesy of Khalid Albaih/flickr)

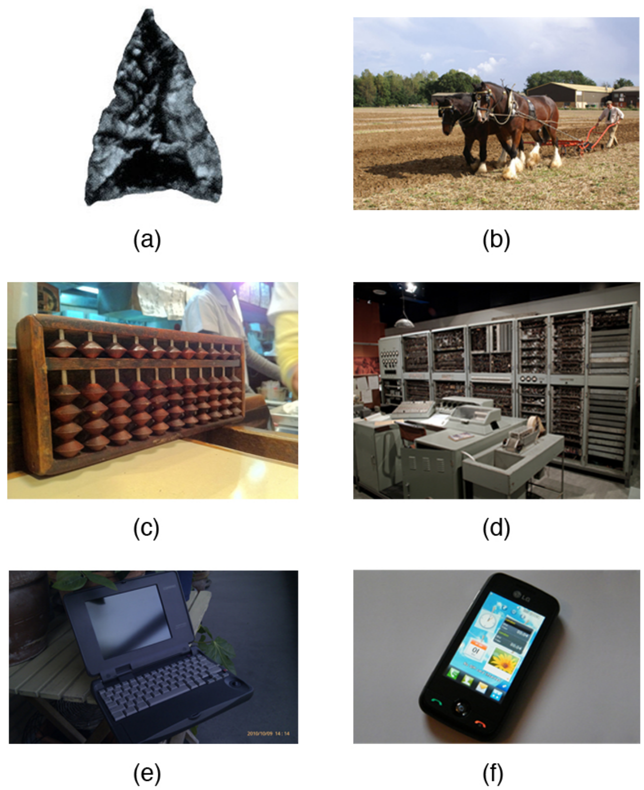
Technology has changed how we interact with each other a lot. It's revolutionary. It has turned “friend” into a verb and has made it possible to share mundane news (“My dog just threw up under the bed! Ugh!”) with hundreds or even thousands of people who might know you only slightly, if at all. You might be glued to your cellphone, even when you should be focused on driving your car, or you might text in class instead of listening to the professor's lecture. When we have the ability to stay constantly connected to a data stream, it is easy to lose focus on the here and now.

At the same time that technology is expanding the boundaries of our social circles, various media are also changing how we perceive and interact with each other. We don’t only use Facebook to keep in touch with friends; we also use it to “like” certain television shows, products, or celebrities. Even television is no longer a one-way medium; it is an interactive one. We are encouraged to tweet, text, or call in to vote for contestants in everything from singing competitions to matchmaking endeavors—bridging the gap between our entertainment and our own lives.

These are some of the questions that interest sociologists. How might we examine these issues from a sociological perspective? A functionalist would probably focus on what social purposes technology and media serve. For example, the web is both a form of technology and of media, and it links individuals and nations in a communication network that facilitates both small family discussions and global trade networks. A functionalist would also be interested in the manifest functions of media and technology, as well as their role in social dysfunction. Someone applying the conflict perspective would probably focus on the systematic inequality created by differential access to media and technology. For example, how can middle-class U.S. citizens be sure the news they hear is an objective account of reality, unsullied by moneyed political interests? Someone applying the interactionist perspective to technology and the media might seek to understand the difference between the real lives we lead and the reality depicted on “reality” television shows, such as *The Bachelor*. Throughout this chapter, we will use our sociological imagination to explore how media and technology impact society.

Technology Today

- Define technology and describe its evolution
- Understand technological inequality and issues related to unequal access to technology
- Describe the role of planned obsolescence in technological development



Technology is the application of science to address the problems of daily life, from hunting tools and agricultural advances, to manual and electronic ways of computing, to today’s tablets and smartphones. (Photo (a) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Martin Pettitt/flickr; Photo (c) courtesy of Whitefield d./flickr; Photo (d) courtesy of Andrew

Parnell/flickr; Photo (e) courtesy of Jemimus/flickr; Photo (f) courtesy of Kārlis Dambrāns/flickr)

What Is Technology?

Although most people probably have in mind computers and cell phones when the subject of technology comes up, it is not merely a product of the modern era. **Fire** and stone tools, for example, were important technological developments during the Stone Age. Our ancestors, indeed, survived several ice ages owing to their ability to control fire. Fire functioned as heat, light, and protection from predators, and expanded the diet of early humans, such as seeds and dead bodies of frozen animals (Wrangham et al. 2010, p. 187).

Although there is no scrap of archeological evidence for Neanderthal **clothing**, the distinctive sloping wear on Neanderthal incisors may derive from their use as a vise to grip leather and sinews, perhaps during the curation of animal skins (ibid.). **Bone** needles have been found at 26,000 year-old sites in central Europe. **Buttons** made from bone or stone disks date to at least this time as well.

Way, way more recently, the **Agricultural Revolution** started. It is important to notice that it didn't start simultaneously in all human societies. Uniformly, however, if it started, it was based on a series of inventions of tools and systems that can till, thresh, plant, and harvest, all of which had been previously done by hand. As the farming methods became more efficient, surplus food could grow more, and so did the population. Social stratification became more clearly structured into caste or class systems or kingdom and feudalism, and so did inequalities among people.

The **Industrial Revolution** was initiated by Britain about 250 years ago that successfully controlled the "triangular trade" (see Ch. 5, Society and Social Interaction) involving Britain itself, its colonies in North America (or what we call today "the U.S."), and Africa. Most important technological

inventions that supported this revolution include steam engine and textile machine. The steam engine helped transport things and people way faster than before. The textile machine helped make cotton goods way more easily than before, and the cotton itself became the most important product for this revolution, supporting about a half of the U.S. economy (!). No wonder President Lincoln got upset when the southern States declared secession!!

The invention and improvement of **microchip** has tremendously innovated the computer and, thus, helped shift the mode of economy from the industrial (goods) to the postindustrial (services) among the core nations including, of course, the U.S. This is another revolution we humans now witness. Examples for this can be found everywhere, e.g., in your pocket (cellphone), on your desk (laptop computer), in your wallet (plastic cards with microchip), and so forth.

Technological Inequality

Some schools sport cutting-edge computer labs, while others sport barbed wire. Is your academic technology at the cusp of innovation, relatively disadvantaged, or somewhere in

between? (Photo courtesy
of Carlos Martinez/flickr)

As with any improvement to human society, not everyone has equal access. Technology, in particular, often creates changes that lead to ever greater inequalities. In short, the gap gets wider faster. This technological stratification has led to a new focus on ensuring better access for all.

Technological development creates technological stratification, or a **knowledge gap**, or digital divide among people mostly in two ways. First, a class-based knowledge gap grows between those who have less access to technology and those who have more access. Second, a usage-based gap grows between those who mainly choose intellectual websites and those who entirely choose 3 S's (sex, sports, and scandal) websites.

Either way, the technological development and the knowledge gap are positively related to one another, i.e., the more, the more. Before the Industrial Revolution where there was negligible technological development, indeed, almost all ordinary people were *equally* unthinking and uninformed.

The situation today is this. Personal **computer** use in the U.S. shifted dramatically from 300,000 users in 1991 to more than 10 million users by 1996 (Rappaport 2009). What happened was that Microsoft released Windows 95 in 1995. Right after that, the U.S. economy, which had been hitting new bottoms again and again, began rapidly recovering. President Bill Clinton took all the credits, proudly. But who contributed to this striking recovery was not *Bill* Clinton, but *Bill* Gates.

Now, the gap began growing between these 10 million users who got access to the Internet and those who didn't. Furthermore, within the 10 million users, the gap was also growing between users of thinking websites and those of unthinking ones. Politicians and the major media outlets love these 3 S's lovers; they are easily deceived.

Data from the Pew Research Center (2011) suggests the emergence of yet another divide. As technological devices gets smaller and more mobile, larger percentages of minority groups (such as Latinos and African Americans) are using their **cellphone** to connect to the Internet. In fact, about 50% of people in these minority groups connect to the web via such devices, whereas only one-third of whites do (Washington 2011). And while it might seem that the Internet is the Internet, regardless of how you get there, there's a notable difference. Tasks like updating a résumé or filling out a job application are much harder on a cell phone than on a wired computer in the home. As a result, the digital divide might mean no access to computers or the Internet, but could mean access to the kind of online technology that allows for empowerment, not just entertainment (Washington 2011).

Mossberger, Tolbert, and Gilbert (2006) demonstrated that the majority of the digital divide for African Americans could be explained by demographic and community-level characteristics, such as socioeconomic status and geographic location. For the Latino population, ethnicity alone, regardless of economics or geography, seemed to limit technology use. Liff and Shepherd (2004) found that women, who are accessing technology shaped primarily by male users, feel less confident in their Internet skills and have less Internet access at both work and home. Finally, Guillén and Suárez (2005) found that the global digital divide resulted from both the economic and sociopolitical characteristics of countries.

Use of Technology and Social Media in Society by Individuals

Do you own an e-reader or tablet? What about your parents or your friends? How often do you check social media or your cell phone? Does all this technology have a positive or negative impact on your life? When it comes to cell phones, 67% of users check their phones for messages or calls even when the phone wasn't ringing. In addition, "44% of cell owners have slept with their phone next to their bed because they wanted to make sure they didn't miss any calls, text messages, or other updates during the night and 29% of cell owners describe their cell phone as 'something they can't imagine living without'" (Smith 2012).

While people report that cell phones make it easier to stay in touch, simplify planning and scheduling their daily activities, and increase their productivity, that's not the only impact of increased cell phone ownership in the United States. Smith also reports that "roughly one in five cell owners say that their phone has made it at least somewhat harder to forget about work at home or on the weekends; to give people their undivided attention; or to focus on a single task without being distracted" (Smith 2012).

A new survey from the Pew Research Center reported that 73 percent of adults engage in some sort of social networking online. Facebook was the most popular platform, and both Facebook users and Instagram users check their sites on a daily basis. Over a third of users check their sites more than once a day (Duggan and Smith 2013).

Online Privacy and Security

As we increase our footprints on the web by going online more often to connect socially, share material, conduct business, and store information, we also increase our vulnerability to those with criminal intent. The Pew Research Center recently published a report that indicated the number of Internet users who express concern over the extent of personal information about them available online jumped 17 percent between 2009 and 2013. In that same survey, 12 percent of respondents indicated they had been harassed online, and 11 percent indicated that personal information, such as their Social Security number, had been stolen (Rainie, Kiesler, Kang, and Madden 2013).

Online privacy and security is a key organizational concern as well. Recent large-scale data breaches at retailers such as Target, financial powerhouses such as JP Morgan, the government health insurance site Healthcare.gov, and cell phone providers such as Verizon, exposed millions of people to the threat of identity theft when hackers got access to personal information by compromising website security.

For example, in late August 2014, hackers breached the iCloud data storage site and promptly leaked wave after wave of nude photos from the private

accounts of actors such as Jennifer Lawrence and Kirsten Dunst (Lewis 2014). While large-scale data breaches that affect corporations and celebrities are more likely to make the news, individuals may put their personal information at risk simply by clicking a suspect link in an official sounding e-mail.

How can individuals protect their data? Numerous facts sheets available through the government, nonprofits, and the private sector outline common safety measures, including the following: become familiar with privacy rights; read privacy policies when making a purchase (rather than simply clicking “accept”); give out only the minimum information requested by any source; ask why information is being collected, how it is going to be used, and who will have access it; and monitor your credit history for red flags that indicate your identity has been compromised.

Net Neutrality

The issue of **net neutrality**, the argument that all Internet data should be treated equally by Internet service providers, is part of the national debate. In reality, many major service providers (such as AT&T, Verizon, Comcast, etc.) manipulate their customers' accessibility to particular types of information and applications, if these can hinder their own profit. Arguing against this greedy corporate tendency, many insist that the Internet should be treated just like water, gas, and electricity whose providers don't manipulate the way they are served.

The other side of the debate holds that designating Internet service providers as common carriers would constitute a regulatory burden and limit the ability of telecommunication companies to operate profitably. Without profit motives, companies would not invest in making improvements to their Internet service or expanding those services to underserved areas. The final decision rests with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the federal government.

Summary

Technology is the application of science to address the problems of daily life. The fast pace of technological advancement means the advancements are continuous, but that not everyone has equal access. The gap created by this unequal access has been termed the digital divide. The knowledge gap refers to an effect of the digital divide: the lack of knowledge or information that keeps those who were not exposed to technology from gaining marketable skills

Glossary

digital divide
: the uneven access to technology around race, class, and geographic lines

e-readiness
: the ability to sort through, interpret, and process digital knowledge

knowledge gap
: the gap in information that builds as groups grow up without access to technology

net neutrality
: the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by internet service providers

planned obsolescence
: the act of a technology company planning for a product to be obsolete or unable from the time it’s created

technology
: the application of science to solve problems in daily life

Media and Technology in Society

- Describe the evolution and current role of different media, like newspapers, television, and new media
- Understand the function of product advertising in media
- Demonstrate awareness of the social homogenization and social fragmentation that occur via modern society’s use of technology and media

In the coming future, there is no doubt that robots are going to play a large role in all aspects of our lives. (Photo courtesy of shay sowden/flickr)

Technology and the media are interwoven, and neither can be separated from contemporary societies. A medium is a means to communication such as print, radio, television, and the Internet. The mass **media** (the plural form of "medium") refer to large-scale communication organizations that can address large numbers of people.

What Are Patents, Trademarks, Servicemarks, and Copyrights?

The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce (USPTO 2015) working for so-called **intellectual property rights**. Its role is to grant patents for inventions, to register trademarks or servicemarks, and to protect copyrights of the authors of original works of authorship. Regarding "patents," first, there are three types: (1) utility, (2) design, and (3) plant.

1. **Utility patents** may be granted to anyone who invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, article of manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof.
2. **Design patents** may be granted to anyone who invents a new, original, and ornamental design for an article of manufacture.
3. **Plant patents** may be granted to anyone who invents or discovers and asexually reproduces any distinct and new variety of plant.

A **trademark** is a word, name, symbol, or device that is used in trade with goods to indicate the source of the goods and to distinguish them from the goods of others. A **servicemark** is the same as a trademark except that it identifies and distinguishes the source of a service rather than a product. The terms “trademark” and “mark” are commonly used to refer to both trademarks and servicemarks.

Copyright is a form of protection provided to the authors of "original works of authorship" including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works, both published and unpublished. The 1976 Copyright Act generally gives the owner of copyright the exclusive right to reproduce the copyrighted work, to prepare derivative works, to distribute copies or phonorecords of the copyrighted work, to perform the copyrighted work publicly, or to display the copyrighted work publicly.

Criticisms of Intellectual Property Rights

two major dangers

The grant of power that comes with "intellectual property rights" carries two major dangers (Drahos et al. 2002, p. 3; paraphrased). First, it justifies monopoly and can block the accessibility for the poor in need. Second, when a thing is patented, it hinders outsiders to join its research and, thus, its improvement.

not affordable to the poor in need
Related to "the poor in need" above, for example, more than 95% of all HIV-infected people now live in the developing countries, which has likewise experienced 95% of all deaths from AIDS (UNAIDS/WHO 2000). Drugs that can treat HIV/AIDS have been developed, but they are patented and expensive, and thus are not affordable to the poor in need.

comes from rain forests and the farms and gardens of poor people in the third world
Seed companies can demand a royalty for the use of patented seeds or chemicals in developing countries, demanding further that farmers pay royalties on seeds saved from the previous harvest (Schaeffer 1997, pp. 204-05). Under the new rules, “a farmer purchasing [patented] seed would have the right to grow the seed but not the right to make seed.” Much of the raw material for new drugs, seeds, and chemicals comes from rain forests and the farms and gardens of poor people in developing countries. The “baseball” tomatoes sold in U.S. supermarkets are the result of cross-breeding tomato varieties taken from Latin American countries during the 1950s and ‘60s. “Yet none of these benefits have been shared with Peru, the original source of the genetic material.” Most of Disney’s major cartoon productions are based on fables and folklore originally told by people in other countries: e.g., The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, Cinderella, and Aladdin. But by copyrighting its own particular version (in words, music, and images), Disney can then sell these stories to people around the world and deny others the right to use them.

Types of Media and Technology

Media and technology have evolved hand in hand, from early print to modern publications, from radio to film to television to... New media emerge constantly, such as those we see in the online world.

Print Newspaper

Early forms of print media, found in ancient Rome, were hand-copied onto boards and carried around to keep the citizenry informed. With the invention of the printing press, the way that people shared ideas changed, as information could be mass produced and stored. For the first time, there was a way to spread knowledge and information more efficiently; many credit this development as leading to the Renaissance and ultimately the Age of Enlightenment. This is not to say that newspapers of old were more trustworthy than the *Weekly World News* and *National Enquirer* are today. Sensationalism abounded, as did censorship that forbade any subjects that would incite the populace.

The invention of the telegraph, in the mid-1800s, changed print media almost as much as the printing press. Suddenly information could be transmitted in minutes. As the nineteenth century became the twentieth, U.S. publishers such as Hearst redefined the world of print media and wielded an enormous amount of power to socially construct national and world events. Of course, even as the media empires of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were growing, print media also allowed for the dissemination of countercultural or revolutionary materials. Internationally, Vladimir Lenin's *Irksa* (*The Spark*) newspaper was published in 1900 and played a role in Russia's growing communist movement (World Association of Newspapers 2004).

With the invention and widespread use of television in the mid-twentieth century, newspaper circulation steadily dropped off, and in the 21st century, circulation has dropped further as more people turn to internet news sites and other forms of new media to stay informed. According to the Pew Research Center, 2009 saw an unprecedented drop in newspaper circulation—down 10.6 percent from the year before (Pew 2010).

This shift away from newspapers as a source of information has profound effects on societies. When the news is given to a large diverse conglomerate of people, it must maintain some level of broad-based reporting and balance in order to appeal to a broad audience and keep them subscribing. As newspapers decline, news sources become more fractured, so each segment of the audience can choose specifically what it wants to hear and what it

wants to avoid. Increasingly, newspapers are shifting online in an attempt to remain relevant. It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information.

Increasingly, newspapers are shifting online in an attempt to remain relevant. It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information. The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2013) reported that audiences for all the major news magazines declined in 2012, though digital ad revenue increased. The same report suggested that, while newspaper circulation is holding steady at around $10 billion after years of decline, it is digital pay plans that allow newspapers to keep their heads above water, and the digital ad revenue that is increasing for news magazines is not enough to compensate for print revenue loss in newspapers.

A 2014 report suggested that U.S. adults read a median of five books per year in 2013, which is about average. But are they reading traditional print or e-books? About 69 percent of people said they had read at least one printed book in the past year, versus 28 percent who said they'd read an e-book (DeSilver 2014). Is print more effective at conveying information? In recent study, Mangen, Walgermo, and Bronnick (2013) found that students who read on paper performed slightly better than those who read an e-book on an open-book reading comprehension exam of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. While a meta-analysis of research by Andrews (1992) seemed to confirm that people read more slowly and comprehend less when reading from screens, a meta-analysis of more recent research on this topic does not show anything definite (Noyes and Garland 2008).

Television and Radio

Radio programming obviously preceded television, but both shaped people's lives in much the same way. In both cases, information (and entertainment) could be enjoyed at home, with a kind of immediacy and community that newspapers could not offer. For instance, many people in the United States might remember when they saw on television or heard on the radio that the Twin Towers in New York City had been attacked in 2001.

Even though people were in their own homes, media allowed them to share these moments in real time. This same kind of separate-but-communal approach occurred with entertainment too. School-aged children and office workers gathered to discuss the previous night's installment of a serial television or radio show.

Right up through the 1970s, U.S. television was dominated by three major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) that competed for ratings and advertising dollars. The networks also exerted a lot of control over what people watched. Public television, in contrast, offered an educational nonprofit alternative to the sensationalization of news spurred by the network competition for viewers and advertising dollars. Those sources—PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), the BBC (British Broadcasting Company), and CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company)—garnered a worldwide reputation for high-quality programming and a global perspective. Al Jazeera, the Arabic independent news station, has joined this group as a similar media force that broadcasts to people worldwide.

The impact of television on U.S. society is hard to overstate. By the late 1990s, 98 percent of U.S. homes had at least one television set, and the average person watched between two and a half and five hours of television daily. All this television has a powerful socializing effect, providing reference groups while reinforcing social norms, values, and beliefs.

Film

The film industry took off in the 1930s, when color and sound were first integrated into feature films. Like television, early films were unifying for society: as people gathered in theaters to watch new releases, they would laugh, cry, and be scared together. Movies also act as time capsules or cultural touchstones for society. From Westerns starring the tough-talking Clint Eastwood to the biopic of Facebook founder and Harvard dropout Mark Zuckerberg, movies illustrate society's dreams, fears, and experiences. While many consider Hollywood the epicenter of moviemaking, India's Bollywood actually produces more films per year, speaking to the cultural aspirations and norms of Indian society.

Increasingly, people are watching films online via Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, and other streaming services. While most streaming video companies keep their user data secret, Nielsen estimated that 38 percent of U.S. citizens accessed Netflix in 2013. In 2013, Google, Inc. reported that YouTube served 1 billion unique viewers every month—an impressive number, considering that it amounts to one-third of the estimated 3 billion accessing the Internet every month (Reuters 2013; International Telecommunication Union 2014).

New Media

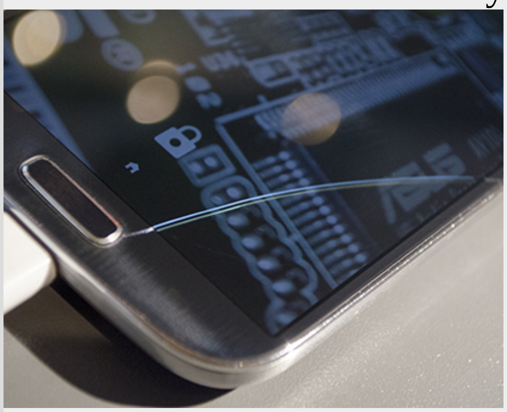
Netflix, one form of new media, exchanges information in the form of DVDs to users in the comfort of their own homes. (Photo courtesy of Marit & Toomas Hinnosaar/flickr)

New media encompasses all interactive forms of information exchange. These include social networking sites, blogs, podcasts, wikis, and virtual

worlds. Clearly, the list grows almost daily. However, there is no guarantee that the information offered is accurate. In fact, the immediacy of new media coupled with the lack of oversight means we must be more careful than ever to ensure our news is coming from accurate sources.

Note:

Planned Obsolescence--Greedy Corporate Strategy



People have trouble keeping up with technological innovation. But people may not be to blame, as manufacturers intentionally develop products with short life spans. (Photo courtesy of Mathias F. Svendsen/flickr)

Chances are your mobile phone company, as well as the makers of your laptop and your household appliances, are all counting on their products to fail. Not too quickly, of course, or consumers wouldn't stand for it—but frequently enough that you might find that it costs far more to fix a device than to replace it with a newer model. This strategy is called **planned obsolescence**, and it is the business practice of planning for a product to be

obsolete or unusable from the time it is created. This greedy corporate strategy yields tons of so-call "e-waste," a dangerous form of garbage--which will be discussed in Ch. 19.
Those who use Microsoft Windows might feel that like the women who purchased endless pairs of stockings, they are victims of planned obsolescence. Every time Windows releases a new operating system, there are typically not many innovations in it that consumers feel they must have. However, the software programs are upwardly compatible only. This means that while the new versions can read older files, the old version cannot read the newer ones. In short order, those who have not upgraded right away find themselves unable to open files sent by colleagues or friends, and they usually wind up upgrading as well. Or how many times did Apple upgrade its iPhone so far?

Product Advertising

Companies use advertising to sell to us, but the way they reach us is changing. Naomi Klein identified the destructive impact of corporate branding her 1999 text, *No Logo*, an antiglobalization treatise that focused on sweatshops, corporate power, and anticonsumerist social movements. In the post-millennial society, synergistic advertising practices ensure you are receiving the same message from a variety of sources and on a variety of platforms. For example, you may see billboards for Miller beer on your way to a stadium, sit down to watch a game preceded by a Miller commercial on the big screen, and watch a halftime ad in which people are shown holding up the trademark bottles. Chances are you can guess which brand of beer is for sale at the concession stand.

Advertising has changed, as technology and media have allowed consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues. From the invention of the remote control, which allows us to skip television advertising without leaving our seats, to recording devices that let us watch programs but skip the ads, conventional television advertising is on the wane. And print media is no different. Advertising revenue in newspapers and on television fell

significantly in 2009, which shows that companies need new ways of getting their messages to consumers.

One model companies are considering to address this advertising downturn uses the same philosophy as celebrity endorsements, just on a different scale. Companies are hiring college students to be their on-campus representatives, and they are looking for popular students engaged in high-profile activities like sports, fraternities, and music. The marketing team is betting that if we buy perfume because Beyoncé tells us to, we'll also choose our cell phone or smoothie brand if a popular student encourages that choice. According to an article in the *New York Times*, fall semester 2011 saw an estimated 10,000 U.S. college students working on campus as brand ambassadors for products from Red Bull energy drinks to Hewlett-Packard computers (Singer 2011). As the companies figure it, college students will trust one source of information above all: other students.

Homogenization and Fragmentation

Despite the variety of media at hand, the mainstream news and entertainment you enjoy are increasingly homogenized. Research by McManus (1995) suggests that different news outlets all tell the same stories, using the same sources, resulting in the same message, presented with only slight variations. So whether you are reading the *New York Times* or the CNN's web site, the coverage of national events like a major court case or political issue will likely be the same.

Simultaneously with this homogenization among the major news outlets, the opposite process is occurring in the newer media streams. With so many choices, people increasingly customize their news experience, minimizing their opportunity to encounter information that does not jive with their worldview (Prior 2005). For instance, those who are staunchly Republican can avoid centrist or liberal-leaning cable news shows and web sites that would show Democrats in a favorable light. They know to seek out Fox News over MSNBC, just as Democrats know to do the opposite. Further, people who want to avoid politics completely can choose to visit web sites that deal only with entertainment or that will keep them up to date on sports

scores. They have an easy way to avoid information they do not wish to hear.

Summary

Media and technology have been interwoven from the earliest days of human communication. The printing press, the telegraph, and the Internet are all examples of their intersection. Mass media have allowed for more shared social experiences, but new media now create a seemingly endless amount of airtime for any and every voice that wants to be heard. Advertising has also changed with technology. New media allow consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues and cause companies to be more innovative and intrusive as they try to gain our attention.

Further Research

To get a sense of the timeline of technology, check out this web site: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Tech_History

To learn more about new media, click here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/new_media

To understand how independent media coverage differs from major corporate affiliated news outlets, review material from the Democracy Now! website: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/2EDemoNow

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Glossary

design patents
: patents that are granted when someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product

evolutionary model of technological change
: a breakthrough in one form of technology that leads to a number of variations, from which a prototype emerges, followed by a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough

media
: all print, digital, and electronic means of communication

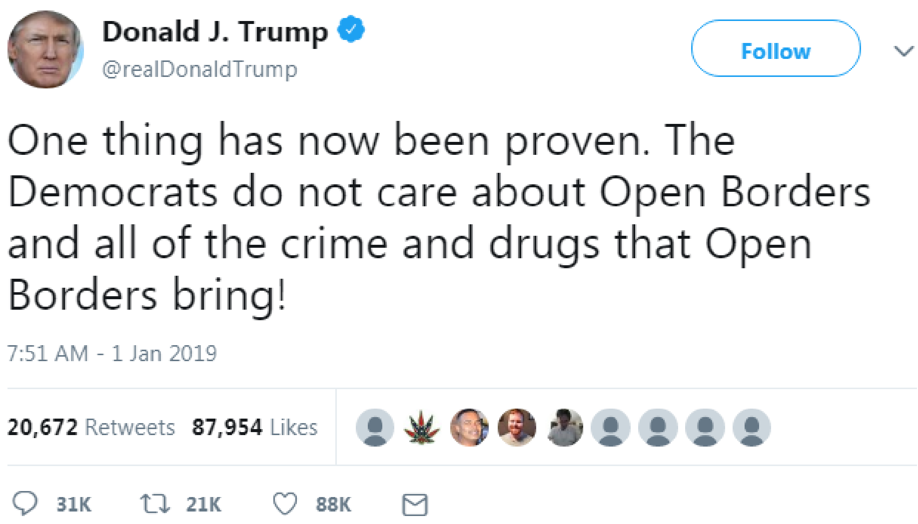
new media
: all interactive forms of information exchange

plant patents
: patents that recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced

utility patents
: patents that are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine

Global Implications of Media and Technology

- Explain the advantages and concerns of media globalization
- Understand the globalization of technology



Twitter is utilized on the political stage.

Technology, and increasingly media, has always driven globalization. In a landmark book, Thomas Friedman (2005), identified several ways in which technology "flattened" the globe and contributed to our global economy. The first edition of *The World Is Flat*, written in 2005, posits that core economic concepts were changed by personal computing and high-speed Internet. Access to these two technological shifts has allowed core-nation corporations to recruit workers in call centers located in China or India.

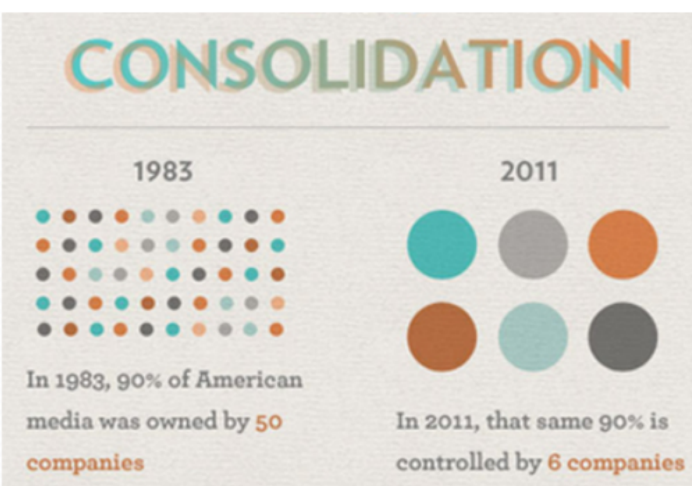
Of course not everyone agrees with Friedman's theory. Many economists pointed out that in reality, innovation, economic activity, and population still gather in geographically attractive areas, and they continue to create economic peaks and valleys, which are by no means flattened out to mean equality for all. China's hugely innovative and powerful cities of Shanghai and Beijing, for example, are worlds away from the rural squalor of the country's poorest denizens.

Friedman is an economist, not a sociologist. His work focuses on the economic gains and risks this new world order entails. In this section, we will look more closely at how media globalization and technological globalization play out in a sociological perspective. As the names suggest, **media globalization** is the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, while **technological globalization** refers to the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology.

Media Consolidation

In the U.S., there are about 1,500 newspapers, 2,600 book publishers, and an equal number of television stations, plus 6,000 magazines and a whopping 10,000 radio outlets (Bagdikian 2004).

On the surface, there is endless opportunity to find diverse media outlets. However, the numbers are misleading. What's going on is **media consolidation**, a process in which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets. This creates an **oligopoly** in which a few firms dominate the media marketplace. In the U.S. today, a small number of super rich predators, like Rockefeller, Rothschild, Bronfman, Newhouse, Murdoch, and Redstone, monopolize the U.S. major media outlets that include: ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The Chicago Tribune... according to *The Global Movement*.



Courtesy of *The Global Movement* < http://www.theglobalmovement.info/wp/areas-of-focus/global-financial-war/who-controls-the-media>.

Media consolidation results in **gatekeeping**, the manipulation of the information, and it is **oligopoly**, a market structure in which a few firms can control things for themselves rather than for their customers. Many observe, indeed, that consolidated media represent the political interests of the power elite, biasing or even hiding facts. President Trump who is hated by them and who, in turn, angrily labels the U.S. media "fake news" may be penetrating this. Also, in an oligopoly, the firms don't have to bother to innovate, improve services, or lower prices. Did you know that watching TV used to be free entirely, just like listening to the radio? Today how much do people pay for that?

Summary

Technology drives globalization, but what that means can be hard to decipher. While some economists see technological advances leading to a more level playing field where anyone anywhere can be a global contender, the reality is that opportunity still clusters in geographically advantaged areas. Still, technological diffusion has led to the spread of more and more technology across borders into peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. However, true technological global equality is a long way off.

Further Research

Check out more on the global digital divide here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Global_Digital_Divide

The Global Movement. "Who Controls the Media." (http://www.theglobalmovement.info/wp/areas-of-focus/global-financial-war/who-controls-the-media).

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Glossary

media consolidation
: a process by which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets

media globalization
: the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas

oligopoly
: a situation in which a few firms dominate a marketplace

technological diffusion
: the spread of technology across borders

technological globalization
: the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology

Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

- Understand and discuss how we analyze media and technology through various sociological perspectives

In this section presented are theoretical perspectives on media and technology based on the major theoretical paradigms: functionalism, conflict theory, feminism, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalism

Because functionalism focuses on how media and technology contribute to the smooth functioning of society, a good place to begin understanding this perspective is to write a list of functions you perceive media and technology to perform. Your list might include the ability to find information on the Internet, television’s entertainment value, or how advertising and product placement contribute to social norms.

Commercial Function

TV commercials can carry significant cultural currency. For some, the ads during the Super Bowl are more water cooler-worthy than the game itself. (Photo courtesy of Dennis Yang/flickr)

As you might guess, with nearly every U.S. household possessing a television, and the 250 billion hours of television watched annually by people in the United States, companies that wish to connect with consumers find television an irresistible platform to promote their goods and services (Nielsen 2012). Television advertising is a highly functional way to meet a market demographic where it lives. Sponsors can use the sophisticated data gathered by network and cable television companies regarding their viewers and target their advertising accordingly. Whether you are watching cartoons

on Nick Jr. or a cooking show on Telemundo, chances are advertisers have a plan to reach you.

And it certainly doesn’t stop with television. Commercial advertising precedes movies in theaters and shows up on and inside public transportation, as well as on the sides of building and roadways. Major corporations such as Coca-Cola bring their advertising into public schools, by sponsoring sports fields or tournaments, as well as filling the halls and cafeterias of those schools with vending machines hawking their goods. With rising concerns about childhood obesity and attendant diseases, the era of soda machines in schools may be numbered. In fact, as part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act and Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Initiative, a ban on junk food in school began in July 2014.

Entertainment Function

An obvious manifest function of media is its entertainment value. Most people, when asked why they watch television or go to the movies, would answer that they enjoy it. And the numbers certainly illustrate that. While 2012 Nielsen research shows a slight reduction of U.S. homes with televisions, the reach of television is still vast. And the amount of time spent watching is equally large. Clearly, enjoyment is paramount. On the technology side, as well, there is a clear entertainment factor to the use of new innovations. From online gaming to chatting with friends on Facebook, technology offers new and more exciting ways for people to entertain themselves.

Social Norm Functions

Even while the media is selling us goods and entertaining us, it also serves to socialize us, helping us pass along norms, values, and beliefs to the next generation. In fact, we are socialized and resocialized by media throughout our whole lives. All forms of media teach us what is good and desirable,

how we should speak, how we should behave, and how we should react to events. Media also provide us with cultural touchstones during events of national significance. How many of your older relatives can recall watching the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger* on television? How many of those reading this textbook followed the events of September 11 or Hurricane Katrina on television or the Internet?

Just as in Anderson and Bushman's (2011) evidence in the Violence in Media and Video Games: Does It Matter? feature, debate still exists over the extent and impact of media socialization. One recent study (Krahe et al. 2011) demonstrated that violent media content does have a desensitizing affect and is correlated with aggressive thoughts. Another group of scholars (Gentile, Mathieson, and Crick 2011) found that among children exposure to media violence led to an increase in both physical and relational aggression. Yet, a meta-analysis study covering four decades of research (Savage 2003) could not establish a definitive link between viewing violence and committing criminal violence.

It is clear from watching people emulate the styles of dress and talk that appear in media that media has a socializing influence. What is not clear, despite nearly fifty years of empirical research, is how much socializing influence the media has when compared to other agents of socialization, which include any social institution that passes along norms, values, and beliefs (such as peers, family, religious institutions, and the like).

Life-Changing Functions

Like media, many forms of technology do indeed entertain us, provide a venue for commercialization, and socialize us. For example, some studies suggest the rising obesity rate is correlated with the decrease in physical activity caused by an increase in use of some forms of technology, a latent function of the prevalence of media in society (Kautiainen et al. 2011). Without a doubt, a manifest function of technology is to change our lives, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. Think of how the digital age has improved the ways we communicate. Have you ever used Skype or another webcast to talk to a friend or family member far away? Or

maybe you have organized a fund drive, raising thousands of dollars, all from your desk chair.

Of course, the downside to this ongoing information flow is the near impossibility of disconnecting from technology that leads to an expectation of constant convenient access to information and people. Such a fast-paced dynamic is not always to our benefit. Some sociologists assert that this level of media exposure leads to **narcotizing dysfunction**, a result in which people are too overwhelmed with media input to really care about the issue, so their involvement becomes defined by awareness instead of by action (Lazerfeld and Merton 1948).

Conflict Perspective

In contrast to theories in the functional perspective, the conflict perspective focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality—social processes that tend to disrupt society rather than contribute to its smooth operation. When we take a conflict perspective, one major focus is the differential access to media and technology embodied in the digital divide. Conflict theorists also look at who controls the media, and how media promotes the norms of upper-middle-class white people in the United States while minimizing the presence of the working class, especially people of color.

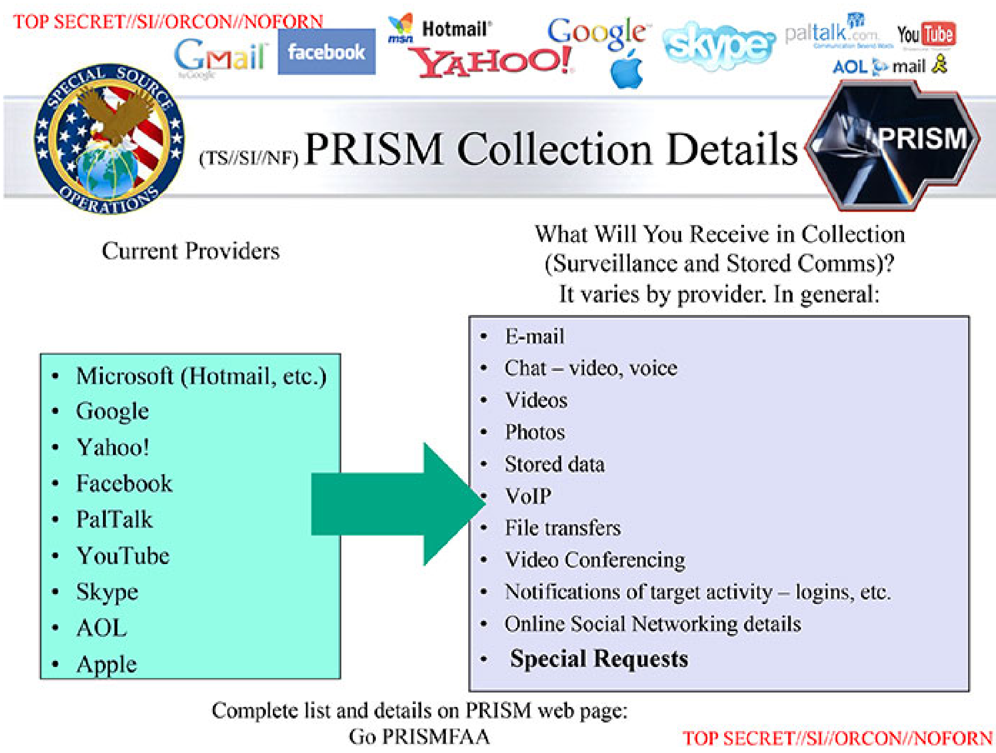
Control of Media and Technology

Powerful individuals and social institutions have a great deal of influence over which forms of technology are released, when and where they are released, and what kind of media is available for our consumption, which is a form of aforementioned "gatekeeping," a result of media consolidation. The people in charge of the media decide what the public is exposed to, which, as C. Wright Mills (1956) famously noted, is the heart of media’s power.

Technological Social Control and Digital Surveillance

Social scientists take the idea of the surveillance society so seriously that there is an entire journal devoted to its study, *Surveillance and Society*. The **panoptic surveillance**, "all-inclusive investigation" by the all-powerful, all-seeing government, is quietly spread in the form of technology used to monitor our every move. Owing to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, the U.S. government can easily justify "panoptic surveillance." Today, digital security cameras capture our movements, observers can track us through our cell phones, and police forces around the world use facial-recognition software.

In addition, according to *The Guardian* (Jun 7, 2013), a section of the U.S. government, called the National Security Agency (NSA), gets help from giant social media firms, namely, Google, Facebook, Apple, and so on. The NSA access is part of a previously undisclosed program called Prism, which allows officials to collect material including search history, the content of emails, file transfers, and live chats (see below).



In reaction, many, if not most, Americans accept this as an effective strategy to fight war on terrorism. The logic behind this is: "If it keeps us

safe, I'm okay with it"; or "If you're not doing anything wrong, you've got nothing to hide." Really?

Here's what Edward Snowden, a former NSA agent who revealed what the NSA had been doing, in a video interview with *Democracy Now* (2013), said:

> Even if you're not doing anything wrong you're being watched and recorded... It's getting to the point you don't have to have done anything wrong, you simply have to eventually fall under suspicion from somebody--even by a wrong call--and then they can use the system to go back in time and scrutinize every decision you've ever made, every friend you've ever discussed something with, and attack you on that basis to sort of derive suspicion from an innocent life and paint anyone in the context of a wrongdoer.

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, lied to Congress when he was asked by Senator Ron Wyden: "Does the NSA collect any type of data at all on hundreds of millions of Americans?" (Greenwald 2014, p. 30) Clapper's reply was a succinct as it was dishonest: "No, sir."

Panoptic surveillance is said to have become brisk under the Bush administration. To be noted, however, James Clapper was working under the Obama (not Bush) administration, which further deepened the surveillance. A journalist, who helped Edward Snowden reveal what the NSA had been doing, argues that President Obama, who campaigned on a vow to have the "most transparent administration in history," does exactly the opposite (Greenwald 2014, p. 50).

Feminist Perspective

What types of women are we exposed to in the media? Some would argue that the range of female images is misleadingly narrow. (Photo courtesy of Cliff1066/flickr)

Take a look at popular television shows, advertising campaigns, and online game sites. In most, women are portrayed in a particular set of parameters and tend to have a uniform look that society recognizes as attractive. Most are thin, white or light-skinned, beautiful, and young. Why does this matter? Feminist perspective theorists believe this idealized image is crucial in creating and reinforcing stereotypes. For example, Fox and Bailenson (2009) found that online female avatars conforming to gender stereotypes enhance negative attitudes toward women, and Brasted (2010) found that media (advertising in particular) promotes gender stereotypes. As early as

1990, *Ms.* magazine instituted a policy to publish without any commercial advertising.

The gender gap in tech-related fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) is no secret. A 2011 U.S. Department of Commerce Report suggested that gender stereotyping is one reason for this gap which acknowledges the bias toward men as keepers of technological knowledge (US Department of Commerce 2011). But gender stereotypes go far beyond the use of technology. Press coverage in the media reinforces stereotypes that subordinate women; it gives airtime to looks over skills, and coverage disparages women who defy accepted norms.

Recent research in new media has offered a mixed picture of its potential to equalize the status of men and women in the arenas of technology and public discourse. A European agency, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (2010), issued an opinion report suggesting that while there is the potential for new media forms to perpetuate gender stereotypes and the gender gap in technology and media access, at the same time new media could offer alternative forums for feminist groups and the exchange of feminist ideas. Still, the committee warned against the relatively unregulated environment of new media and the potential for antifeminist activities, from pornography to human trafficking, to flourish there.

Increasingly prominent in the discussion of new media and feminism is **cyberfeminism**, the application to, and promotion of, feminism online. Research on cyberfeminism runs the gamut from the liberating use of blogs by women living in Iraq during the second Gulf War (Peirce 2011) to an investigation of the Suicide Girls web site (Magnet 2007).

Symbolic Interactionism

Technology itself may act as a symbol for many. The kind of computer you own, the kind of car you drive, your ability to afford the latest Apple product—these serve as a social indicator of wealth and status. **Neo-Luddites** are people who see technology as symbolizing the coldness and alienation of modern life. But for **technophiles**, technology symbolizes the

potential for a brighter future. For those adopting an ideological middle ground, technology might symbolize status (in the form of a massive flat-screen television) or failure (ownership of a basic old mobile phone with no bells or whistles).

Social Construction of Reality

The media create and spread symbols that become the basis for our shared understanding of society. Symbolic interactionists focus on this social construction of reality, an ongoing process in which people subjectively create and understand reality. Media constructs our reality in numerous ways. For some, people on TV can become their primary groups. For many others, the media present reference groups, whose statuses they long for, or with whom they try to identify.

Social Networking and Social Construction

While Tumblr and Facebook encourage us to check in and provide details of our day through online social networks, corporations can just as easily promote their products on these sites. Even supposedly crowd-sourced sites like Yelp (which aggregates local reviews) are not immune to corporate shenanigans. That is, we think we are reading objective observations when in reality we may be buying into another form of advertising.

Facebook, which started as a free social network for college students, is increasingly a monetized business, selling you goods and services in subtle ways. But chances are you don’t think of Facebook as one big online advertisement. What started out as a symbol of coolness and insider status, unavailable to parents and corporate shills, now promotes consumerism in the form of games and fandom. For example, think of all the money spent to upgrade popular Facebook games like Candy Crush. And notice that whenever you become a “fan,” you likely receive product updates and special deals that promote online and real-world consumerism. It is unlikely that millions of people want to be “friends” with Pampers. But if it means a

weekly coupon, they will, in essence, rent out space on their Facebook pages for Pampers to appear. Thus, we develop both new ways to spend money and brand loyalties that will last even after Facebook is considered outdated and obsolete.

Summary

There are myriad theories about how society, technology, and media will progress. Functionalism sees the contribution that technology and media provide to the stability of society, from facilitating leisure time to increasing productivity. Conflict theorists are more concerned with how technology reinforces inequalities among communities, both within and among countries. They also look at how media typically give voice to the most powerful, and how new media might offer tools to help those who are disenfranchised. Symbolic interactionists see the symbolic uses of technology as signs of everything from a sterile futuristic world to a successful professional life.

Further Research

To learn more about cyberfeminism, check out the interdisciplinary artist collective, subRosa: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/cyberfeminism

To explore the implications of panoptic surveillance, review some surveillance studies at the free, open source Surveillance and Society site: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Surveillance

Read an example of socialist media from *Jacobin* magazine here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/2EJacobin

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Glossary

cyberfeminism
: the application to and promotion of feminism online

gatekeeping
: the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount

neo-Luddites

those who see technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life

panoptic surveillance

a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly

technophiles

those who see technology as symbolizing the potential for a brighter future

Introduction to Deviance, Crime, and Social Control class="introduction"

Washington is one of several states where marijuana use has been legalized, decriminalized, or approved for medical use. (Photo courtesy of Dominic Simpson/flickr)

Twenty-three states in the United States have passed measures legalizing marijuana in some form; the majority of these states approve only medical use of marijuana, but fourteen states have decriminalized marijuana use, and four states approve recreational use as well. Washington state legalized recreational use in 2012, and in the 2014 midterm elections, voters in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington DC supported ballot measures to allow recreational use in their states as well (Governing 2014). Florida’s 2014 medical marijuana proposal fell just short of the 60 percent needed to pass (CBS News 2014).

The Pew Research Center found that a majority of people in the United States (52 percent) now favor legalizing marijuana. This 2013 finding was the first time that a majority of survey respondents supported making marijuana legal. A question about marijuana’s legal status was first asked in a 1969 Gallup poll, and only 12 percent of U.S. adults favored legalization at that time. Pew also found that 76 percent of those surveyed currently do not favor jail time for individuals convicted of minor possession of marijuana (Motel 2014).

Even though many people favor legalization, 45 percent do not agree (Motel 2014). Legalization of marijuana in any form remains controversial and is actively opposed; Citizen’s Against Legalizing Marijuana (CALM) is one of the largest political action committees (PACs) working to prevent or repeal legalization measures. As in many aspects of sociology, there are no absolute answers about deviance. What people agree is deviant differs in various societies and subcultures, and it may change over time.

Tattoos, vegan lifestyles, single parenthood, breast implants, and even jogging were once considered deviant but are now widely accepted. The change process usually takes some time and may be accompanied by significant disagreement, especially for social norms that are viewed as essential. For example, divorce affects the social institution of family, and so divorce carried a deviant and stigmatized status at one time. Marijuana use was once seen as deviant and criminal, but U.S. social norms on this issue are changing.

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Deviance and Control

- Define deviance, and explain the nature of deviant behavior
- Differentiate between methods of social control

Much of the appeal of watching entertainers perform in drag comes from the humor inherent in seeing everyday norms violated. (Photo courtesy of Cassiopeija/Wikimedia Commons)

Deviance refers to any violation of norms. It's that simple, but then, we need to recall what "norms" mean. Norms govern socially acceptable “behaviors,” or can be seen as rules for what is appropriate to do and what is not. In short, deviance is, do something that our society judges is inappropriate to do. The difficulty here lies in that behaviors completely appropriate in one society or in an era may not be so in another. This means that giving an example of a deviant activity, which everybody would understand, is difficult, especially in culturally diverse societies or in rapidly changing societies. "When people in New York drive cars," for example, "they keep screaming the F word." "Hm, interesting... But which part of this is an example of deviance?"

Any violation of laws is considered **crime**. The difference between deviance and crime lies in that while the former is socially (or informally) penalized, the latter is legally (formally) penalized. The similarity between them, on the other hand, is that just as the judgment of deviance varies across societies and changes over time, that of crime varies, as well. Depending on the state laws, for example, whether using marijuana is a crime or not varies. Or "harakiri" (the samurai way of suicide) was considered honorable in the past, but it is a crime today.

Social Control

All societies practice **social control**, the regulation and enforcement of norms. The underlying goal of social control is to maintain **social order**, an arrangement of practices and behaviors on which society's members base their daily lives. But then, again, it's important to see that there's no such thing as universally agreeable social order. Something that is orderly to some, that is, may not be so to others. In the U.S., even slavery was considered orderly until the latter half of the nineteenth century. What about same-sex marriage today?

A means to enforcing rules is known as **sanctions**. Sanctions can be positive or negative. **Positive sanctions** are rewards given for conforming to norms. The high five and thumbs up are examples. **Negative sanctions** are punishments for violating norms. A frown or looking the other way is an example. Sometimes, negative sanctions can take a form of violence, be it psychological or physical. Some types of hate crimes, such as those against LGBT, can be seen as this.

Summary

Deviance refers to any violation of norms. Whether or not something is deviant depends on contextual definitions, the situation, and people's response to the behavior. Society seeks to limit deviance through the use of sanctions that help maintain a system of social control.

Further Research

Although we rarely think of it in this way, deviance can have a positive effect on society. Check out the Positive Deviance Initiative, a program initiated by Tufts University to promote social movements around the world that strive to improve people's lives, at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Positive_Deviance.

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Glossary

deviance
: a violation of contextual, cultural, or social norms

formal sanctions
: sanctions that are officially recognized and enforced

informal sanctions
: sanctions that occur in face-to-face interactions

negative sanctions
: punishments for violating norms

positive sanctions
: rewards given for conforming to norms

sanctions
: the means of enforcing rules

social control

the regulation and enforcement of norms

social order

an arrangement of practices and behaviors on which society’s members base their daily lives

Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance

- Describe the functionalist view of deviance in society through four sociologist's theories
- Explain how conflict theory understands deviance and crime in society
- Describe the symbolic interactionist approach to deviance, including labeling and other theories

Functionalists believe that deviance plays an important role in society and can be used to challenge people's views. Protesters, such as these PETA members, often use this method to draw attention to their cause. (Photo courtesy of David Shankbone/flickr)

Why does deviance occur? How does it affect a society? Since the early days of sociology, scholars have developed theories that attempt to explain what deviance and crime mean to society. These theories can be grouped according to the three major sociological paradigms: functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory.

Functionalism

The basic ideas of functionalism, or structural functionalism, center around the way the different elements of a society (or parts of a structure)

contribute to the whole. Even deviance is seen as a component of a society in this sociological paradigm. How? Let's see it in this section.

Émile Durkheim: The Essential Nature of Deviance

Émile Durkheim believed that deviance is a functional component in a society in several ways, namely, reaffirmation of norms, in-group solidarity, and social change.

- First, deviants (i.e., those who violate norms) show their societies examples of how not to behave, owing to which norms are reaffirmed conversely.
- Second, people place deviants in out-group (or "they") and themselves, in in-group ("we"). This can help maintain social solidarity within in-group.
- Third, sometimes there are situations in which deviants are correct and all others, wrong. About four hundred years ago, for example, Galileo was one of the very few who came to claim that our planet circulates around the sun, and not the other way around. He was heavily penalized as a deviant, but he was correct and almost all others, wrong. Societies can change in right ways, sometimes owing to those called deviants.

Robert Merton: Strain Theory

Sociologist Robert Merton agreed that deviance is an inherent part of a functioning society, but he expanded on Durkheim's ideas by developing **strain theory**, which demonstrates that the accessibility to socially legitimate "means" (or tools) to socially shared "end" (goals) plays a part in determining if a person conforms or deviates. Americans are encouraged, for example, to achieve the "American Dream" of financial success. In terms of the accessibility to means to this dream, however, not everyone in our society stands on equal footing. According to Merton's theory, if people

lack means to end, but nonetheless if they still try to pursue end, they tend to have higher chances to be involved in criminal activities.

	Wealth, Yes	Wealth, No
Higher Education, Yes	The Established	e.g., School Teacher
Higher Education, No	*Innovation* (e.g., Drug Dealers)	The Poor

The Strain Theory: Means (e.g., Education) and End (Wealth)

As shown above, there are four combinations between the two variables, i.e., "means" and "end." Education is given as an example of legitimate means to socially shared end, wealth in this discussion.

- The combination of "higher education yes" and "wealth yes" results in the established people. There's no problem; they got socially shared end through legitimate means.
- The combination of "higher education yes" and "wealth no" results in educated but not that rich people, such as school teachers. There's no problem here, either.
- The combination of "higher education no" and "wealth no" results simply in the poor people. Legally saying, they don't have a problem, either.
- The combination of "higher education no" but "wealth yes," however, results in what Robert Merton called *innovation*. It means that these people didn't have legitimate means (education) but got socially shared end (wealth). They are the ones who tend to have higher chances to be involved in criminal activities, such as drug dealing.

Notice that Merton's theory refers only to social environments, such as the accessibility to means to end, and to nothing like criminal personalities, dispositions, or family records. This is, therefore, very sociological, implying that some particular social conditions and locations can strain or allure individuals placed in them.

Conflict Theory

Karl Marx: An Unequal System

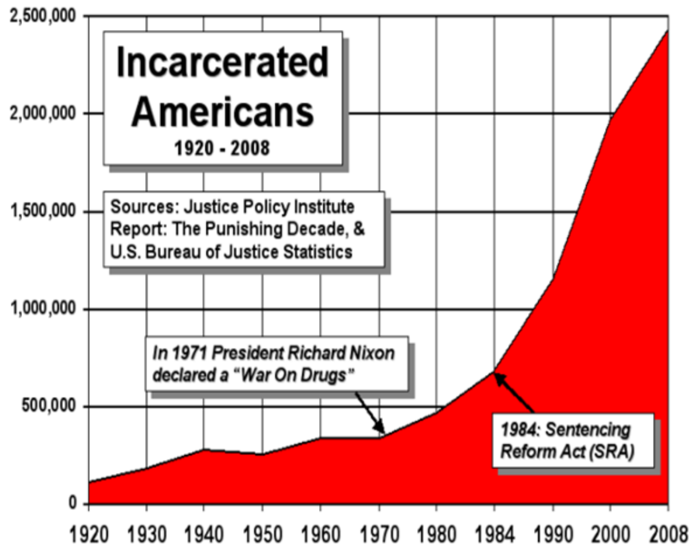
Initiated by Karl Marx, **conflict theory** looks to social and economic factors as the causes of crime and deviance. Marx believed that the general population was divided into two groups. He labeled the wealthy, who controlled the means of production and business, the *bourgeois*. He labeled the workers, who depended on the bourgeois for employment and survival, the *proletariat*. Marx believed that the bourgeois centralized their power and influence through government, laws, and other authority agencies in order to maintain and expand their positions of power in society. Though Marx spoke little of deviance, his ideas created the foundation for conflict theorists who study the intersection of deviance and crime with wealth and power.

Race Matters

One in every three black males born today can expect to go to prison at some point in their life, compared with one in every six Latino males, and one in every 17 white males, if current incarceration trends continue (huffintonpost.com).

According to Justice Department data cited in the report, police arrested black youth for drug crimes at more than twice the rate of white youth between 1980 and 2010, nationwide. Yet a 2012 study from the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that white high-school students were slightly more likely to have abused illegal drugs within the past month than black students of the same age.

Privatization of Prisons



Cortesy of http://november.org/graphs/Americans.gif

The drug war led the country's population of incarcerated drug offenders to soar from 42,000 in 1980 to nearly half a million, an increase by more than 10 times, in 2007. Behind this looms the privatization of prisons growing in the 1980s when Ronald Reagan was the U.S. president--i.e., prisons are now run by private corporations for profit (Michaels 2010). A juvenile court judge was paid by private prison officials to sentence kids to harsher punishments in order to keep the company's private facility filled (Brickner et al. 2011). Also, private-prison companies have indirectly supported policies that put more Americans behind bars--such as California's three-strikes rule--by donating to politicians who support them (Washington Post 2015)

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level approach that helps explain how societies or their segments come to view behaviors as deviant or conventional. Labeling theory and control theory, among others, fall within the realm of symbolic interactionism.

Labeling Theory

Usually, people are labeled deviants because they violate norms. According to **labeling theory**, however, the other way around is also quite possible. That is, people violate norms because they are labeled deviants. Some suggest, for example, to label a teenager a delinquent can trigger a process that leads to greater involvement in deviance (Lopes et al. 2012). To avoid the label of delinquent, indeed, some judges divert youthful offenders away from the criminal justice system or jail, which can fatally label them, and instead assign them to social workers and counselors.

Control Theory

Continuing with an examination of large social factors, **control theory** states that social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society. Individuals who believe they are a part of society are less likely to commit crimes against it.

Travis Hirschi (1969) identified four types of social bonds that connect people to society:

1. *Attachment* measures our connections to others. When we are closely attached to people, we worry about their opinions of us. People conform to society's norms in order to gain approval (and prevent disapproval) from family, friends, and romantic partners.
2. *Commitment* refers to the investments we make in the community. A well-respected local businesswoman who volunteers at her synagogue and is a member of the neighborhood block organization has more to lose from committing a crime than a woman who doesn't have a career or ties to the community.
3. Similarly, levels of *involvement*, or participation in socially legitimate activities, lessen a person's likelihood of deviance. Children who are members of little league baseball teams have fewer family crises.
4. The final bond, *belief*, is an agreement on common values in society. If a person views social values as beliefs, he or she will conform to them. An environmentalist is more likely to pick up trash in a park, because a clean environment is a social value to him (Hirschi 1969).

Summary

The three major sociological paradigms offer different explanations for the motivation behind deviance and crime. Functionalists point out that deviance can be functional since it reinforces norms by reminding people of the consequences of violating them. Conflict theorists argue that crime stems from a system of inequality that keeps those with power at the top and those without power at the bottom. Symbolic interactionists focus on the socially constructed nature of the labels related to deviance. Crime and deviance are learned from the environment and enforced or discouraged by those around us.

Further Research

The Skull and Bones Society made news in 2004 when it was revealed that then-President George W. Bush and his Democratic challenger, John Kerry, had both been members at Yale University. In the years since, conspiracy theorists have linked the secret society to numerous world events, arguing that many of the nation's most powerful people are former Bonesmen. Although such ideas may raise a lot of skepticism, many influential people of the past century have been Skull and Bones Society members, and the society is sometimes described as a college version of the power elite. Journalist Rebecca Leung discusses the roots of the club and the impact its ties between decision-makers can have later in life. Read about it at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Skull_and_Bones.

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Glossary

conflict theory
: a theory that examines social and economic factors as the causes of criminal deviance

control theory
: a theory that states social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society

cultural deviance theory

a theory that suggests conformity to the prevailing cultural norms of lower-class society causes crime

differential association theory

a theory that states individuals learn deviant behavior from those close to them who provide models of and opportunities for deviance

labeling theory

the ascribing of a deviant behavior to another person by members of society

master status

a label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual

power elite

a small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources

primary deviance

a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual’s self-image or interactions with others

secondary deviance

deviance that occurs when a person’s self-concept and behavior begin to change after his or her actions are labeled as deviant by members of society

social disorganization theory

a theory that asserts crime occurs in communities with weak social ties and the absence of social control

strain theory

a theory that addresses the relationship between having socially acceptable goals and having socially acceptable means to reach those goals

Crime and the Law

- Identify and differentiate between different types of crimes
- Evaluate U.S. crime statistics
- Understand the three branches of the U.S. criminal justice system

How is a crime different from other types of deviance? (Photo courtesy of Duffman/Wikimedia Commons.)

Although deviance is a violation of social norms, it’s not always punishable, and it’s not necessarily bad. **Crime**, on the other hand, is a behavior that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions. Walking to class backward is a deviant behavior. Driving with a blood alcohol percentage over the state’s limit is a crime. Like other forms of deviance, however, ambiguity exists concerning what constitutes a crime and whether all crimes are, in fact, “bad” and deserve punishment. For example, during the 1960s, civil rights activists often violated laws intentionally as part of their effort to bring about racial equality. In hindsight, we recognize that the laws that deemed many of their actions crimes—for instance, Rosa Parks taking a seat in the “whites only” section of the bus—were inconsistent with social equality.

As you have learned, all societies have informal and formal ways of maintaining social control. Within these systems of norms, societies have **legal codes** that maintain formal social control through laws, which are rules adopted and enforced by a political authority. Those who violate these rules incur negative formal sanctions. Normally, punishments are relative to the degree of the crime and the importance to society of the value underlying the law. As we will see, however, there are other factors that influence criminal sentencing.

Types of Crimes

Not all crimes are given equal weight. Society generally socializes its members to view certain crimes as more severe than others. For example, most people would consider murdering someone to be far worse than stealing a wallet and would expect a murderer to be punished more severely than a thief. In modern U.S. society, crimes are classified as one of two types based on their severity. **Violent crimes** (also known as “crimes against a person”) are based on the use of force or the threat of force. Rape, murder, and armed robbery fall under this category. **Nonviolent crimes** involve the destruction or theft of property but do not use force or the threat of force. Because of this, they are also sometimes called “property crimes.” Larceny, car theft, and vandalism are all types of nonviolent crimes. If you use a crowbar to break into a car, you are committing a nonviolent crime; if you mug someone with the crowbar, you are committing a violent crime.

When we think of crime, we often picture **street crime**, or offenses committed by ordinary people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces. An often overlooked category is **corporate crime**, or crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment. Embezzlement, insider trading, and identity theft are all types of corporate crime. Although these types of offenses rarely receive the same amount of media coverage as street crimes, they can be far more damaging. Financial frauds such as insurance scams, Ponzi schemes, and improper practices by banks can devastate families who lose their savings or home.

An often-debated third type of crime is **victimless crime**. Crimes are called victimless when the perpetrator is not explicitly harming another person. As

opposed to battery or theft, which clearly have a victim, a crime like drinking a beer when someone is twenty years old or selling a sexual act do not result in injury to anyone other than the individual who engages in them, although they are illegal. While some claim acts like these are victimless, others argue that they actually do harm society. Prostitution may foster abuse toward women by clients or pimps. Drug use may increase the likelihood of employee absences. Such debates highlight how the deviant and criminal nature of actions develops through ongoing public discussion.

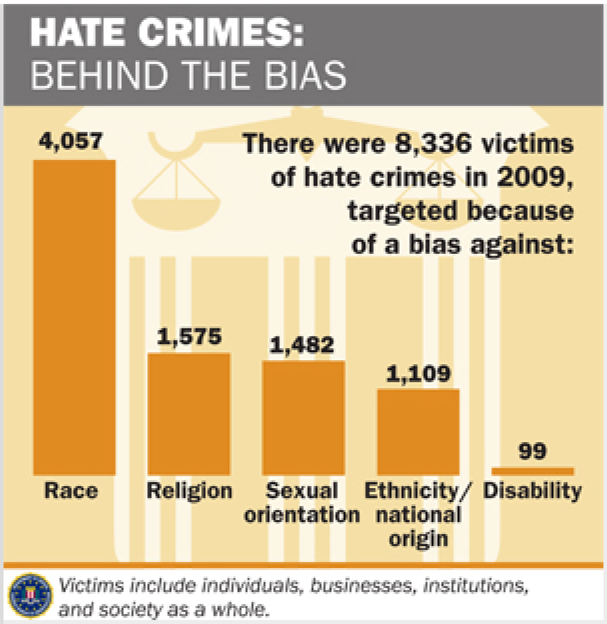
Note:

Hate Crimes

On the evening of October 3, 2010, a seventeen-year-old boy from the Bronx was abducted by a group of young men from his neighborhood and taken to an abandoned row house. After being beaten, the boy admitted he was gay. His attackers seized his partner and beat him as well. Both victims were drugged, sodomized, and forced to burn one another with cigarettes. When questioned by police, the ringleader of the crime explained that the victims were gay and "looked like [they] liked it" (Wilson and Baker 2010).

Attacks based on a person's race, religion, or other characteristics are known as **hate crimes**. Hate crimes in the United States evolved from the time of early European settlers and their violence toward Native Americans. Such crimes weren't investigated until the early 1900s, when the Ku Klux Klan began to draw national attention for its activities against blacks and other groups. The term "hate crime," however, didn't become official until the1980s (Federal Bureau of Investigations 2011).

An average of 195,000 Americans fall victim to hate crimes each year, but fewer than five percent ever report the crime (FBI 2010). The majority of hate crimes are racially motivated, but many are based on religious (especially anti-Semitic) prejudice (FBI 2010). After incidents like the murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming in 1998 and the tragic suicide of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi in 2010, there has been a growing awareness of hate crimes based on sexual orientation.



In the United States, there were 8,336 reported victims of hate crimes in 2009. This represents less than five percent of the number of people who claimed to be victims of hate crimes when surveyed. (Graph courtesy of FBI 2010)

Crime Statistics

The FBI gathers data from approximately 17,000 law enforcement agencies, and the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) is the annual publication of this data (FBI 2011). The UCR has comprehensive information from police reports but fails to account for the many crimes that go unreported, often due to victims’ fear, shame, or distrust of the police. The quality of this data is also inconsistent because of differences in approaches to gathering victim data; important details are not always asked for or reported (Cantor and Lynch 2000).

Due to these issues, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics publishes a separate self-report study known as the National Crime Victimization Report (NCVR). A **self-report study** is a collection of data gathered using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews. Self-report data are gathered each year, asking approximately 160,000 people in the United States about the frequency and types of crime they've experienced in their daily lives (BJS 2013). The NCVR reports a higher rate of crime than the UCR, likely picking up information on crimes that were experienced but never reported to the police. Age, race, gender, location, and income-level demographics are also analyzed (National Archive of Criminal Justice Data 2010).

The NCVR survey format allows people to more openly discuss their experiences and also provides a more-detailed examination of crimes, which may include information about consequences, relationship between victim and criminal, and substance abuse involved. One disadvantage is that the NCVR misses some groups of people, such as those who don't have telephones and those who move frequently. The quality of information may also be reduced by inaccurate victim recall of the crime (Cantor and Lynch 2000).

Public Perception of Crime

Neither the NCVR nor the UCS accounts for all crime in the United States, but general trends can be determined. Crime rates, particularly for violent and gun-related crimes, have been on the decline since peaking in the early 1990s (Cohn, Taylor, Lopez, Gallagher, Parker, and Maass 2013). However, the public believes crime rates are still high, or even worsening. Recent surveys (Saad 2011; Pew Research Center 2013, cited in Overburg and Hoyer 2013) have found U.S. adults believe crime is worse now than it was twenty years ago.

Inaccurate public perception of crime may be heightened by popular crime shows such as *CSI*, *Criminal Minds* and *Law & Order* (Warr 2008) and by extensive and repeated media coverage of crime. Many researchers have found that people who closely follow media reports of crime are likely to estimate the crime rate as inaccurately high and more likely to feel fearful

about the chances of experiencing crime (Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz 2000). Recent research has also found that people who reported watching news coverage of 9/11 or the Boston Marathon Bombing for more than an hour daily became more fearful of future terrorism (Holman, Garfin, and Silver 2014).

The U.S. Criminal Justice System

A **criminal justice system** is an organization that exists to enforce a legal code. There are three branches of the U.S. criminal justice system: the police, the courts, and the corrections system.

Police

Police are a civil force in charge of enforcing laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level. No unified national police force exists in the United States, although there are federal law enforcement officers. Federal officers operate under specific government agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Federal officers can only deal with matters that are explicitly within the power of the federal government, and their field of expertise is usually narrow. A county police officer may spend time responding to emergency calls, working at the local jail, or patrolling areas as needed, whereas a federal officer would be more likely to investigate suspects in firearms trafficking or provide security for government officials.

State police have the authority to enforce statewide laws, including regulating traffic on highways. Local or county police, on the other hand, have a limited jurisdiction with authority only in the town or county in which they serve.

Here, Afghan National Police Crisis Response Unit members train in Surobi, Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of isafmedia/flickr)

Courts

Once a crime has been committed and a violator has been identified by the police, the case goes to court. A **court** is a system that has the authority to make decisions based on law. The U.S. judicial system is divided into federal courts and state courts. As the name implies, federal courts (including the U.S. Supreme Court) deal with federal matters, including trade disputes, military justice, and government lawsuits. Judges who preside over federal courts are selected by the president with the consent of Congress.

State courts vary in their structure but generally include three levels: trial courts, appellate courts, and state supreme courts. In contrast to the large courtroom trials in TV shows, most noncriminal cases are decided by a judge without a jury present. Traffic court and small claims court are both types of trial courts that handle specific civil matters.

Criminal cases are heard by trial courts with general jurisdictions. Usually, a judge and jury are both present. It is the jury's responsibility to determine guilt and the judge's responsibility to determine the penalty, though in some states the jury may also decide the penalty. Unless a defendant is found "not guilty," any member of the prosecution or defense (whichever is the losing side) can appeal the case to a higher court. In some states, the case then goes to a special appellate court; in others it goes to the highest state court, often known as the state supreme court.

This county courthouse in Kansas (left) is a typical setting for a state trial court. Compare this to the courtroom of the Michigan Supreme Court (right). (Photo (a) courtesy of Ammodramus/Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Steve & Christine/Wikimedia Commons)

Corrections

The **corrections system**, more commonly known as the prison system, is charged with supervising individuals who have been arrested, convicted, and sentenced for a criminal offense. At the end of 2010, approximately seven million U.S. men and women were behind bars (BJS 2011d).

The U.S. incarceration rate has grown considerably in the last hundred years. In 2008, more than 1 in 100 U.S. adults were in jail or prison, the highest benchmark in our nation’s history. And while the United States accounts for 5 percent of the global population, we have 25 percent of the world’s inmates, the largest number of prisoners in the world (Liptak 2008b).

Prison is different from jail. A jail provides temporary confinement, usually while an individual awaits trial or parole. Prisons are facilities built for individuals serving sentences of more than a year. Whereas jails are small and local, prisons are large and run by either the state or the federal government.

Parole refers to a temporary release from prison or jail that requires supervision and the consent of officials. Parole is different from probation, which is supervised time used as an alternative to prison. Probation and parole can both follow a period of incarceration in prison, especially if the prison sentence is shortened.

Summary

Crime is established by legal codes and upheld by the criminal justice system. In the United States, there are three branches of the justice system: police, courts, and corrections. Although crime rates increased throughout most of the twentieth century, they are now dropping.

Further Research

Is the U.S. criminal justice system confusing? You’re not alone. Check out this handy flowchart from the Bureau of Justice Statistics: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/US_Criminal_Justice_BJS

How is crime data collected in the United States? Read about the methods of data collection and take the National Crime Victimization Survey. Visit http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Victimization_Survey

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Glossary

corporate crime
: crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment

corrections system
: the system tasked with supervising individuals who have been arrested for, convicted of, or sentenced for criminal offenses

court
: a system that has the authority to make decisions based on law

crime
: a behavior that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions

criminal justice system
: an organization that exists to enforce a legal code

hate crimes
: attacks based on a person's race, religion, or other characteristics

legal codes
: codes that maintain formal social control through laws

nonviolent crimes
: crimes that involve the destruction or theft of property, but do not use force or the threat of force

police
: a civil force in charge of regulating laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level

self-report study
: a collection of data acquired using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews

street crime

crime committed by average people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces

victimless crime
: activities against the law, but that do not result in injury to any individual other than the person who engages in them

violent crimes
: crimes based on the use of force or the threat of force

Introduction to Gender, Sex, and Sexuality
class="introduction"

Some children may learn at an early age that their gender does not correspond with their sex. (Photo courtesy of Rajesh Kumar/flickr)

Can you explain how sex, sexuality, and gender are different from each other? In this chapter, we will discuss the differences between sex and

gender, along with issues like gender identity and sexuality. We will also explore various theoretical perspectives on the subjects of gender and sexuality, including the social construction of sexuality and queer theory.

Sex and Gender

- Define and differentiate between sex and gender
- Define and discuss what is meant by gender identity
- Understand and discuss the role of homophobia and heterosexism in society
- Distinguish the meanings of transgender, transsexual, and homosexual identities

While the biological differences between males and females are fairly straightforward, the social and cultural aspects of being a man or woman can be complicated. (Photo courtesy of PublicInsta)

Sex and gender are not the same. Sociologists and other social scientists view them as conceptually distinct. The word **sex** has two different meanings and is complicated. One is about biological differences between males and females that are given to us at birth. The other is about bodily

interactions between individuals involving their genitals, which is very much complicated for social scientists to study, as will be seen below.

The word **gender**, by contrast, involves more social aspects that we have to learn through the process of socialization. It refers to socially defined behaviors and attitudes for a girl or for a boy to maintain. It's nurture and not nature. This means that while "gender" varies across societies and changes over time, "sex" as a biological trait doesn't. For this reason, when social scientists study differences between females and males in their behaviors and attitudes, they tend to use "gender," rather than "sex." When they study bodily interactions involving genitals, of course, it is "sex" or sexual intercourse that they use.

A person’s sex, as determined by his or her biology, is not necessarily consistent with his or her gender. A baby boy who is born with male genitalia is identified as male. As he grows, however, he may identify with the feminine aspects of his culture. This can happen to girls, as well. Rather, it should be noticed that one's gender (behavior, attitude, and identity) may not correspond 100% with his/her sex (genitalia).

The dichotomous view of gender (the notion that someone is either male or female) is specific to certain cultures and is not universal. In some cultures gender is viewed as fluid. In the past, some anthropologists used the term *berdache* to refer to individuals who occasionally or permanently dressed and lived as a different gender. The practice has been noted among certain Native American tribes (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 1997). Samoan culture accepts what Samoans refer to as a “third gender.” *Fa’afafine*, which translates as “the way of the woman,” is a term used to describe individuals who are born biologically male but embody both masculine and feminine traits. Fa’afafines are considered an important part of Samoan culture. Individuals from other cultures may mislabel them as homosexuals because fa’afafines have a varied sexual life that may include men and women (Poasa 1992).

The Legalese of Sex and Gender

The terms *sex* and *gender* have not always been differentiated in the English language. It was not until the 1950s that U.S. and British psychologists and other professionals working with intersex and transsexual patients formally

began distinguishing between sex and gender. Since then, psychological and physiological professionals have increasingly used the term gender (Moi 2005).

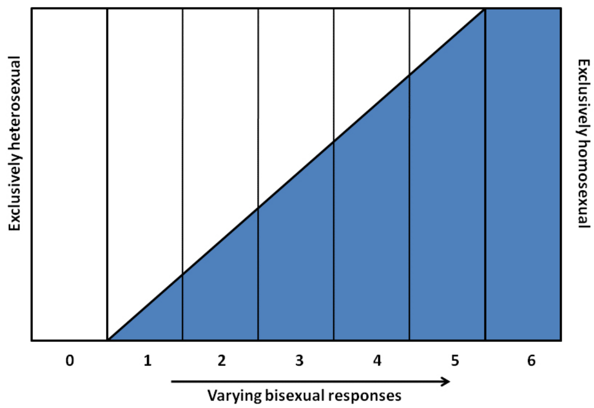
Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to physical, mental, emotional, and sexual attraction to a particular sex. Sexual orientation can be categorized into four types: *heterosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of the other sex; *homosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of the same sex; *bisexuality*, the attraction to individuals of either sex; and *asexuality*, no attraction to either sex.

Heterosexuals and homosexuals may also be referred to informally as “straight” and “gay,” respectively. The United States is a "heteronormative" society, meaning it assumes only heterosexuality is normal sexual orientation. Consider that homosexuals are often asked, “When did you know you were gay?” but heterosexuals are rarely asked, “When did you know that you were straight?” (Ryle 2011).

According to current scientific understanding, individuals are usually aware of their sexual orientation between middle childhood and early adolescence (American Psychological Association 2008), although it can change over time. At the point of puberty, some homosexuals or bisexuals may be able to announce their sexual orientations, while others may be unready or unwilling to confess their sexual orientation since it goes against U.S. society’s historical norms (APA 2008). This reflects the heteronormative tendency of our society.

Alfred Kinsey was among the first to conceptualize sexual orientation as a continuum rather than a strict dichotomy of gay or straight. He created a six-point rating scale that ranges from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual (see the figure below). In his 1948 work *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Kinsey writes, “Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats... The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects” (Kinsey 1948).



The Kinsey scale indicates that sexual orientation can be measured by continuum (more/less) rather than dichotomy (either/or).

Sexual orientation is not an either-or thing, like either dead or alive, or either passing or failing, but a more-or-less thing. One can, thus, say, "I'm more homosexual than you; in other words, you are more heterosexual than me." When one's sexual orientation changes, one can also say, "I've become more homosexual, compared to myself several years ago."

There is no scientific consensus regarding the exact reasons why an individual holds a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual orientation. Research has been conducted to study the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, but there has been no evidence that links sexual orientation to one factor (APA 2008).

Homosexuals and bisexuals are treated still today in prejudiced ways in schools, the workplace, and the military. In 2011, for example, Sears and Mallory used General Social Survey data from 2008 to show that 27% of lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) respondents reported experiencing sexual orientation-based discrimination during the five years prior to the survey.

Further, 38% of openly LGB people experienced discrimination during the same time.

Not just being socially discriminated against, but homosexuality was officially judged to be a "mental disorder" until 1973 by American Psychiatric Association, until 1975 by American Psychological Association, and until 1992 by the World Health Organization (WHO). Furthermore, it was also legally judged to be a "crime" in some states in the U.S. until 2003, in which the "Supreme Court issued a sweeping declaration of constitutional liberty for gay men and lesbians today, overruling a Texas sodomy law" (New York Times 2003).

Major policies to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation have not come into effect until the last few years. In 2011, President Obama overturned “don’t ask, don’t tell,” a controversial policy that required homosexuals in the US military to keep their sexuality secret. The Employee Non-Discrimination Act, which ensures workplace equality regardless of sexual orientation, is still pending full government approval. Organizations such as GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) advocate for homosexual rights and encourage governments and citizens to recognize the presence of sexual discrimination and work to prevent it. Other advocacy agencies frequently use the acronyms **LGBT** and LGBTQ, which stands for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender” (and “Queer” or “Questioning” when the Q is added).

In 2015, eventually, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution guarantees a right to **same-sex marriage**. This epoch-making decision, which was the culmination of decades of litigation and activism, finally set off jubilation and tearful embraces across the country, the first same-sex marriages in several states, and resistance--or at least stalling--in others (New York Times 2015). It came against the backdrop of fast-moving changes in public opinion, with polls indicating that most Americans now approve of the unions. One of the Supreme Court justices said that "no union is more profound than marriage" and that the due process clause of the 14th Amendment extends to "certain personal choices central to individual dignity and autonomy, including intimate choices that define personal identity and beliefs" (U.S. News 2015).

Gender Roles

The term **gender roles** refers to socially defined norms (behaviors) and values (attitudes) attached to the ideas of maleness and femaleness. Related to this, there are two important things to know. First, we learn them through the process of socialization. Indeed, little boys and girls don't differ from each other in their behaviors or attitudes because they haven't learned gender roles that much, yet. When they become preteens, by which they have learned gender roles, however, most boys act as boys and most girls, as girls.

Second, gender roles, just like the meaning of gender itself, vary across societies and change over time. Although most girls in the U.S. show off their body shape with tight shirts and pants, for example, those in Arabic countries cover their body shape with loose clothing. Regarding changing gender roles, for example, today many girls in the U.S. play succor or even practice karate, but two or three generations ago, very few, if any, girls did it. Societies are changing all the time, more or less.

One way children learn gender roles is through play. Parents typically supply boys with trucks, toy guns, and superhero paraphernalia, which are active toys that promote motor skills, aggression, and solitary play. Daughters are often given dolls and dress-up apparel that foster nurturing, social proximity, and role play. Studies have shown that children will most likely choose to play with “gender appropriate” toys (or same-gender toys) even when cross-gender toys are available because parents give children positive feedback (in the form of praise, involvement, and physical closeness) for gender normative behavior (Caldera, Huston, and O’Brien 1998).

Fathers tend to be more involved when their sons engage in gender-appropriate activities such as sports. (Photo courtesy of Shawn Lea/flickr)

The drive to adhere to masculine and feminine gender roles continues later in life. Men tend to outnumber women in professions such as law enforcement, the military, and politics. Women tend to outnumber men in care-related occupations such as childcare, social work, and healthcare--although the term “doctor” still conjures the image of a man. These occupational roles are examples of typical U.S. male and female behavior, derived from our culture’s traditions. Adherence to them demonstrates fulfillment of social expectations but not necessarily personal preference (Diamond 2002).

Gender Identity

Gender identity is one's own subjective ideas about one's own gender. It may not correspond with one's sex, more or less. If it doesn't, to a great

extent, it can be considered cross-gender identification or the "gender identity dysphoria." This used to be treated as a disorder, but is no longer today. The gender identity dysphoria can develop in childhood in the following ways, among others (Health Research Funding Org 2014):

1. A repeated stated desire to be, or insistence that they are, the opposite sex.
2. A strong preference for cross-dressing in female attire in boys; an insistence on only wearing masculine clothing in girls.
3. A strong and persistent preference for cross-gender roles in make believe play, in addition to having fantasies of being the opposite sex.
4. An intense desire to participate in the pastimes and games ‘belonging’ to the opposite sex.
5. A strong preference for playmates or friends of the opposite sex.

According to American Psychological Association, **transgender** is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior does not conform to sex assigned at birth. While gender identity is attitude, transgender is behavior ranging from "transvestism" (dressing and acting like the opposite sex) to "transsexualism" through medical interventions. It is estimated that 2 to 5% of the U.S. population is transgender (Transgender Law and Policy Institute 2007).

Transgender individuals who engage in transsexualism through medical interventions such as surgery and hormonal therapy are called transsexuals. According to Health Research Funding Org (2014), as much as 1 out of 30,000 adult males seek sexual reassignment surgery, and at least 1 out of 100,000 adult females do it.

Just like homosexuality and bisexuality, there is no single, conclusive explanation for what causes transgender. Transgender expressions and experiences are so diverse that it is difficult to identify their origin. Some hypotheses suggest biological factors such as genetics or prenatal hormone levels as well as social and cultural factors such as childhood and adulthood experiences. Most experts believe that all of these factors contribute to a person’s gender identity (APA 2008).

Gender identity as well as sexual orientation do not seem to be simply fixed. They can change, in more or less complicated ways. In New England, in 2009, for example, researchers interviewed some transgender men (originally women). Of them, 16 said that they had sex with non-transgender men (ordinary men). The majority (62.5%) had used the Internet to meet sexual partners and "hook-up" with an anonymous sex partner in the past years (Reisner et al. 2010, p. 1).

Also, as will be shown in Ch. 13, Marriage and Family, 73% of the children in same-sex couple households are biological children (of only one of the parents) (U.S. Census 2009). Why is it possible for same-sex couples to have their own biological children? Evidently, they switched their sexual orientation from heterosexual to homosexual. Again, sexual orientation, as well as gender identity, do not seem to be simply fixed. They can change.

Summary

The terms “sex” and “gender” refer to two different identifiers. Sex denotes biological characteristics differentiating males and females, while gender denotes social and cultural characteristics of masculine and feminine behavior. Sex and gender are not always synchronous. Individuals who strongly identify with the opposing gender are considered transgender.

Further Research

For more information on gender identity and advocacy for transgender individuals see the Global Action for Trans Equality web site at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/trans_equality.

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Glossary

DOMA

Defense of Marriage Act, a 1996 U.S. law explicitly limiting the definition of “marriage” to a union between one man and one woman and allowing each individual state to recognize or deny same-sex marriages performed in other states

gender dysphoria

a condition listed in the DSM-5 in which people whose gender at birth is contrary to the one they identify with. This condition replaces "gender identity disorder"

gender identity

a person’s deeply held internal perception of his or her gender

gender role

society’s concept of how men and women should behave

gender

a term that refers to social or cultural distinctions of behaviors that are considered male or female

heterosexism

an ideology and a set of institutional practices that privilege heterosexuals and heterosexuality over other sexual orientations

homophobia

an extreme or irrational aversion to homosexuals

sex

a term that denotes the presence of physical or physiological differences between males and females

sexual orientation

a person’s physical, mental, emotional, and sexual attraction to a particular sex (male or female)

transgender

an adjective that describes individuals who identify with the behaviors and characteristics that are other than their biological sex

transsexuals
transgender individuals who attempt to alter their bodies through medical interventions such as surgery and hormonal therapy

Gender

- Explain the influence of socialization on gender roles in the United States
- Understand the stratification of gender in major American institutions
- Describe gender from the view of each sociological perspective

Traditional images of U.S. gender roles reinforce the idea that women should be subordinate to men. (Photo courtesy of Sport Suburban/flickr)

Gender and Socialization

The phrase “boys will be boys” is often used to justify behavior such as pushing, shoving, or other forms of aggression from young boys. The phrase implies that such behavior is unchangeable and something that is part of a boy’s nature. Aggressive behavior, when it does not inflict

significant harm, is often accepted from boys and men because it is congruent with the cultural script for masculinity. Scripts are generally learned and handed over from one generation to another through the process of socialization.

Socialization

Children learn at a young age that there are distinct expectations for boys and girls. Cross-cultural studies reveal that children are aware of gender roles by age two or three. At four or five, most children are firmly entrenched in culturally appropriate gender roles (Kane 1996). Children acquire these roles through socialization, a series of interactions with other people, especially parents and, then, peer.

Although our society may have a stereotype that associates motorcycles with men, female bikers demonstrate that a woman's place extends far beyond the kitchen in the modern United States. (Photo courtesy of Robert Couse-Baker/flickr)

Gender stereotypes are shaped upon sexism. **Sexism** refers to a set of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination on the basis of sex. It varies in its level of severity. In parts of the world, mostly the third world countries, where women are strongly undervalued, young girls may not be given the same access to nutrition, healthcare, and education as boys. Further, they will grow up believing they deserve to be treated differently from boys (UNICEF 2011; Thorne 1993). In the U.S., as well, unequal treatment of women continues to pervade social life. Sexism occurs at both the micro- and macro-levels. Many sociologists focus on discrimination that is built into the social structure; this type of discrimination is known as institutional discrimination (Pincus 2008), as opposed to individual discrimination.

Gender socialization occurs through four major agents of socialization: family, peer, school, and mass media. Each agent reinforces gender roles by creating and maintaining normative expectations for gender-specific behaviors. Exposure also occurs through secondary agents such as religion and the workplace. Repeated exposure to these agents over time leads men and women to a false sense that they are acting naturally rather than following socially constructed roles.

Family is the first agent of socialization. There is considerable evidence that parents socialize sons and daughters differently. Generally speaking, girls are given more latitude to step outside of their prescribed gender role (Coltrane and Adams 2004; Kimmel 2000; Raffaelli and Ontai 2004). However, differential socialization typically results in greater privileges afforded to sons. For instance, boys are allowed more autonomy and independence at an earlier age than daughters. They may be given fewer restrictions on appropriate clothing, dating habits, or curfew. Sons are also often free from performing domestic duties such as cleaning or cooking and other household tasks that are considered feminine. Daughters are limited by their expectation to be passive and nurturing, generally obedient, and to assume many of the domestic responsibilities.

Even when parents set gender equality as a goal, there may be underlying indications of inequality. For example, boys may be asked to take out the

garbage or perform other tasks that require strength or toughness, while girls may be asked to fold laundry or perform duties that require neatness and care. It has been found that fathers are firmer in their expectations for gender conformity than are mothers, and their expectations are stronger for sons than they are for daughters (Kimmel 2000). This is true in many types of activities, including preference for toys, play styles, discipline, chores, and personal achievements. As a result, boys tend to be particularly attuned to their father's disapproval when engaging in an activity that might be considered feminine, like dancing or singing (Coltraine and Adams 2008). Parental socialization and normative expectations also vary along lines of social class, race, and ethnicity. African American families, for instance, are more likely than Caucasians to model an egalitarian role structure for their children (Staples and Boulin Johnson 2004).

The reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes continues once a child reaches school age. Until very recently, schools were rather explicit in their efforts to stratify boys and girls. The first step toward stratification was segregation. Girls were encouraged to take home economics or humanities courses and boys to take math and science.

Studies suggest that gender socialization still occurs in schools today, perhaps in less obvious forms (Lips 2004). Teachers may not even realize they are acting in ways that reproduce gender differentiated behavior patterns. Yet any time they ask students to arrange their seats or line up according to gender, teachers may be asserting that boys and girls should be treated differently (Thorne 1993).

Even in levels as low as kindergarten, schools subtly convey messages to girls indicating that they are less intelligent or less important than boys. For example, in a study of teacher responses to male and female students, data indicated that teachers praised male students far more than female students. Teachers interrupted girls more often and gave boys more opportunities to expand on their ideas (Sadker and Sadker 1994). Further, in social as well as academic situations, teachers have traditionally treated boys and girls in opposite ways, reinforcing a sense of competition rather than collaboration (Thorne 1993). Boys are also permitted a greater degree of freedom to

break rules or commit minor acts of deviance, whereas girls are expected to follow rules carefully and adopt an obedient role (Ready 2001).

Mimicking the actions of significant others is the first step in the development of a separate sense of self (Mead 1934). Like adults, children become agents who actively facilitate and apply normative gender expectations to those around them. When children do not conform to the appropriate gender role, they may face negative sanctions such as being criticized or marginalized by their peers. Though many of these sanctions are informal, they can be quite severe. For example, a girl who wishes to take karate class instead of dance lessons may be called a "tomboy" and face difficulty gaining acceptance from both male and female peer groups (Ready 2001). Boys, especially, are subject to intense ridicule for gender nonconformity (Coltrane and Adams 2004; Kimmel 2000).

Mass media serves as another significant agent of gender socialization. In television and movies, women tend to have less significant roles and are often portrayed as wives or mothers. When women are given a lead role, it often falls into one of two extremes: a wholesome, saint-like figure or a malevolent, hypersexual figure (Etaugh and Bridges 2003). This same inequality is pervasive in children's movies (Smith 2008). Research indicates that in the ten top-grossing G-rated movies released between 1991 and 2013, nine out of ten characters were male (Smith 2008).

Television commercials and other forms of advertising also reinforce inequality and gender-based stereotypes. Women are almost exclusively present in ads promoting cooking, cleaning, or childcare-related products (Davis 1993). Think about the last time you saw a man star in a dishwasher or laundry detergent commercial. In general, women are underrepresented in roles that involve leadership, intelligence, or a balanced psyche. Of particular concern is the depiction of women in ways that are dehumanizing, especially in music videos. Even in mainstream advertising, however, themes intermingling violence and sexuality are quite common (Kilbourne 2000).

Social Stratification and Inequality

The United States is characterized by gender stratification (as well as stratification of race, social class, and the like). Evidence of gender stratification is especially keen within the economic realm. Despite making up nearly half (49.8 percent) of payroll employment, men vastly outnumber women in authoritative, powerful, and, therefore, high-earning jobs (U.S. Census 2010). Even when a woman's employment status is equal to a man's, she gets about 80% of men's wages (ibid.). Women in the paid labor force also still do the majority of the unpaid work at home. On an average day, 84% of women (compared to 67% of men) spend time doing household management activities (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). This double duty keeps working women in a subordinate role in the family structure (Hochschild and Machung 1989).

Gender stratification through the division of labor is not exclusive to the United States. According to George Murdock's classic work, *Outline of World Cultures* (1954), all societies classify work by gender. When a pattern appears in all societies, it is called a cultural universal. While the phenomenon of assigning work by gender is universal, its specifics are not. The same task is not assigned to either men or women worldwide. But the way each task's associated gender is valued is notable. In Murdock's examination of the division of labor among 324 societies around the world, he found that in nearly all cases the jobs assigned to men were given greater prestige (Murdock and White 1968). Even if the job types were very similar and the differences slight, men's work was still considered more vital.

There is a long history of gender stratification in the United States. When looking to the past, it would appear that society has made great strides in terms of abolishing some of the most blatant forms of gender inequality (see timeline below) but underlying effects of male dominance still permeate many aspects of society.

- Before 1809—Women could not execute a will
- Before 1840—Women were not allowed to own or control property
- Before 1920—Women were not permitted to vote
- Before 1963—Employers could legally pay a woman less than a man for the same work

- Before 1973—Women did not have the right to a safe and legal abortion (Imbornoni 2009)

In some cultures, women do all of the household chores with no help from men, as doing housework is a sign of weakness, considered by society as a feminine trait. (Photo courtesy of Evil Erin/flickr)

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender

Sociological theories help sociologists to develop questions and interpret data. For example, a sociologist studying why middle-school girls are more likely than their male counterparts to fall behind grade-level expectations in math and science might use a feminist perspective to frame her research. Another scholar might proceed from the conflict perspective to investigate why women are underrepresented in political office, and an interactionist might examine how the symbols of femininity interact with symbols of political authority to affect how women in Congress are treated by their male counterparts in meetings.

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism has provided one of the most important perspectives of sociological research in the twentieth century and has been a major influence on research in the social sciences, including gender studies. Viewing the family as the most integral component of society, assumptions about gender roles within marriage assume a prominent place in this perspective.

Functionalists argue that gender roles were established well before the pre-industrial era when men typically took care of responsibilities outside of the home, such as hunting, and women typically took care of the domestic responsibilities in or around the home. These roles were considered functional because women were often limited by the physical restraints of pregnancy and nursing and unable to leave the home for long periods of time. Once established, these roles were passed on to subsequent generations since they served as an effective means of keeping the family system functioning properly.

When changes occurred in the social and economic climate of the United States during World War II, changes in the family structure also occurred. Many women had to assume the role of breadwinner (or modern hunter-gatherer) alongside their domestic role in order to stabilize a rapidly changing society. When the men returned from war and wanted to reclaim their jobs, society fell back into a state of imbalance, as many women did not want to forfeit their wage-earning positions (Hawke 2007).

Conflict Theory

According to conflict theory, society is a struggle for dominance among social groups (like women versus men) that compete for scarce resources. When sociologists examine gender from this perspective, we can view men as the dominant group and women as the subordinate group. According to conflict theory, social problems are created when dominant groups exploit or oppress subordinate groups. Consider the Women's Suffrage Movement or the debate over women's "right to choose" their reproductive futures. It

is difficult for women to rise above men, as dominant group members create the rules for success and opportunity in society (Farrington and Chertok 1993).

Friedrich Engels, a German sociologist, studied family structure and gender roles. Engels suggested that the same owner-worker relationship seen in the labor force is also seen in the household, with women assuming the role of the proletariat. This is due to women’s dependence on men for the attainment of wages, which is even worse for women who are entirely dependent upon their spouses for economic support. Contemporary conflict theorists suggest that when women become wage earners, they can gain power in the family structure and create more democratic arrangements in the home, although they may still carry the majority of the domestic burden, as noted earlier (Rismanand and Johnson-Sumerford 1998).

Feminist Theory

Men and women differ from each other in many respects. Among others, they differ tremendously in term of values. The masculine values include independence and competition, while the feminine values include interdependence and cooperation--the polar opposite of the masculine values. A feminist’s study (Sanday 2004) revealed that in **matriarchal** (female-centered) societies, people tend to work more cooperatively than competitively.

In **patriarchal** (male-centered) societies, by contrast, men’s contributions are seen as more valuable than those of women. Patriarchal perspectives and arrangements are widespread and taken for granted. As a result, women’s viewpoints tend to be silenced or marginalized to the point of being discredited or considered invalid. Sexism grew when the societal arrangement was shifting from matriarchy to patriarchy, that is, when the mode of economy was shifting from hunting and gathering to agricultural, and to industrial...

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism aims to understand human behavior by analyzing the critical role of symbols in human interaction. This is certainly relevant to the discussion of masculinity and femininity. Imagine that you walk into a bank hoping to get a small loan for school, a home, or a small business venture. If you meet with a male loan officer, you may state your case logically by listing all the hard numbers that make you a qualified applicant as a means of appealing to the analytical characteristics associated with masculinity. If you meet with a female loan officer, you may make an emotional appeal by stating your good intentions as a means of appealing to the caring characteristics associated with femininity.

Because the meanings attached to symbols are socially created and not natural, and fluid, not static, we act and react to symbols based on the current assigned meaning. The word *gay*, for example, once meant “cheerful,” but by the 1960s it carried the primary meaning of “homosexual.” In transition, it was even known to mean “careless” or “bright and showing” (Oxford American Dictionary 2010). Furthermore, the word *gay* (as it refers to a homosexual), carried a somewhat negative and unfavorable meaning fifty years ago, but it has since gained more neutral and even positive connotations. When people perform tasks or possess characteristics based on the gender role assigned to them, they are said to be **doing gender**. This notion is based on the work of West and Zimmerman (1987). Whether we are expressing our masculinity or femininity, West and Zimmerman argue, we are always "doing gender." Thus, gender is something we do or perform, not something we are.

In other words, both gender and sexuality are socially constructed. The **social construction of sexuality** refers to the way in which socially created definitions about the cultural appropriateness of sex-linked behavior shape the way people see and experience sexuality. This is in marked contrast to theories of sex, gender, and sexuality that link male and female behavior to **biological determinism**, or the belief that men and women behave differently due to differences in their biological traits.

Summary

Children become aware of gender roles in their earliest years, and they come to understand and perform these roles through socialization, which occurs through four major agents: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Socialization into narrowly prescribed gender roles results in the stratification of males and females. Each sociological perspective offers a valuable view for understanding how and why gender inequality occurs in our society.

Further Research

Learn more about gender at the Kinsey Institute here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/2EKinsey

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Glossary

biological determinism
: the belief that men and women behave differently due to inherent sex differences related to their biology

doing gender
: the performance of tasks based upon the gender assigned to us by society and, in turn, ourselves

sexism
: the prejudiced belief that one sex should be valued over another

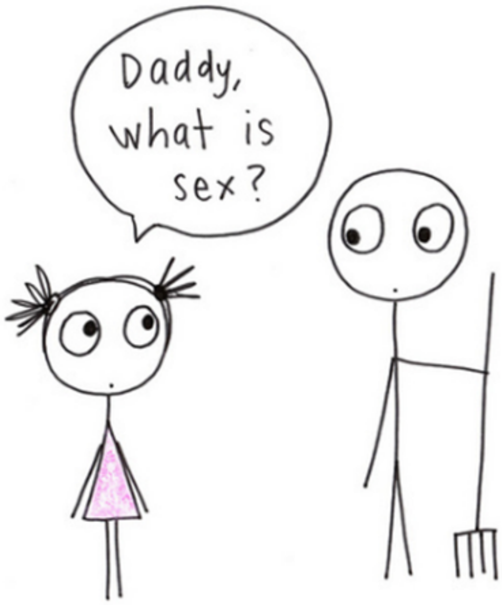
social construction of sexuality

socially created definitions about the cultural appropriateness of sex-linked behavior which shape how people see and experience sexuality

Sex and Sexuality

- Understand different attitudes associated with sex and sexuality
- Define sexual inequality in various societies
- Discuss theoretical perspectives on sex and sexuality

Studying Sexuality



Courtesy: thedailyenglishshow.com.

According to a gay historian and sociologist Jeffery Weeks (1985), **sexuality** is as much about words, images, ritual and fantasy as it is about the body: the way we think about sex fashions the way we live it (p. 3). As a curiously unsettled and troubling status, it can be a source of pain as much as pleasure, anxiety as much as affirmation, identity crisis as much as stability of self. It's a very important subject matter to study, but it remains *un-naked* in the history of social sciences. There are several reasons for this.

Sexuality Un-naked

First, until the latter half of the twentieth century, most scholars who studied sexuality were Europeans or those whose viewpoints were imbued

with European cultures mostly based on Christianity and patriarchy (male-centered societal arrangements). Their attitudes toward sexuality were uniquely strict, compared to all other people's, such as Africans', Asians', and Native Americans', which, according to anthropologist Milton Diamond (2004), see "sex without guilt, shame, or sin." In European cultures thick in patriarchy, for example, gays (especially men who take female roles in sex) were labeled a “he-whore…, a species of outcast woman of the lowest standing” (Richards 2009, p. 8). By sharp contrast, Japan, which doesn't follow the Judeo-Christian tradition in terms of sexuality, tolerates homosexuality (Rosner 1994, p. 197). Early studies of sexuality, hence, tended to be biased, more or less, through the strict-minded lens of European cultures.

Second, most scholars who studied sexuality until the latter half of the twentieth century were men. They have been struggling with understanding female sexuality. Sigmund Freud (1964 [1926], p. 212), for example, openly stated that after all, female sexuality is “a dark continent” (i.e., mystery). In the 1970s, however, the feminist movement led mostly by women began creating an enormous interest in women’s history anew, of which the history of women’s bodies and sexual lives was a significant part (Wiesner-Hanks 2000). The feminists contend that most studies of modern sexuality are closely related to "power" and patriarchy, and are, in fact, studies of male sexuality.

Third, in research, sexual attitudes and behaviors must be studied through questionnaires or interviews rather than through direct observation (Diamond 2004). Most studies of sexuality are, hence, based on what people are saying. The subject matter is so sensitive, however, that sometimes, people cannot be honest about what they do or how they think. For example, can you be honest about your own masturbation habits to an interviewer? Even in anonymous questionnaires, it is known that people tell lies. An old joke observes, for example, that 98% of people masturbate--and the other 2% are lying. Here are the data actually gathered in a scientific study in 1992, in the U.S.: among those aged 18–60, 38% of women and 61% of men reported any masturbation over the preceding year (Das 2007). What do you think?

Sexuality in the United States

U.S. culture, imbued with Christianity and patriarchy, is clumsy in its attitudes toward sex. Men are freer to express their sexual desire than are women, and many men erroneously believe that sex is for men's pleasure. As a result, research indicates that the "majority of women are unable to attain orgasm through intercourse alone," although most of them can get it through masturbation. Feminists consider the female orgasmic disorder to be a prevalent problem that can affect couples relationships and generate emotional distress (Mah et al. 2004, p. 100). One of the major reasons for this disorder is said to be the lack of partner involvement in sexual activity (ibid., p. 101), that is, many men are so selfish in such activity.

Belief that men have—or have the right to—more sexual urges than women creates a double standard. Ira Reiss, a pioneer researcher in the field of sexual studies, defined the *double standard* as prohibiting premarital sexual intercourse for women but allowing it for men (Reiss 1960). This standard has evolved into allowing women to engage in premarital sex only within committed love relationships, but allowing men to engage in sexual relationships with as many partners as they wish without condition (Milhausen and Herold 1999). Due to this double standard, a woman is likely to have fewer sexual partners in her life time than a man. According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) survey, the average thirty-five-year-old woman has had three opposite-sex sexual partners while the average thirty-five-year-old man has had twice as many (Centers for Disease Control 2011).

The future of a society's sexual attitudes may be somewhat predicted by the values and beliefs that a country's youth expresses about sex and sexuality. Data from the most recent National Survey of Family Growth (2013) reveals that 70% of boys and 78% of girls ages 15 to 19 said they "agree" or "strongly agree" that "it's okay for an unmarried female to have a child." In a separate survey, 65% of teens stated that they "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that although waiting until marriage for sex is a nice idea, it's not realistic (NBC News 2005). This does not mean that today's youth have given up traditional sexual values such as monogamy. Nearly all college men (98.9%) and women (99.2%) who participated in a 2002 study

on sexual attitudes stated they wished to settle down with one mutually exclusive sexual partner at some point in their lives, ideally within the next 5 years (Pedersen et al. 2002).

Sex Education

One of the biggest controversies regarding sexual attitudes is sexual education in U.S. classrooms. Unlike in Sweden, sex education is not required in all public school curricula in the United States. The heart of the controversy is not about whether sex education should be taught in school (studies have shown that only seven percent of U.S. adults oppose sex education in schools); it is about the *type* of sex education that should be taught.

Much of the debate is over the issue of abstinence. In a 2005 survey, 15 percent of U.S. respondents believed that schools should teach abstinence exclusively and should not provide contraceptives or information on how to obtain them. Forty-six percent believed schools should institute an abstinence-plus approach, which teaches children that abstinence is best but still gives information about protected sex. Thirty-six percent believed teaching about abstinence is not important and that sex education should focus on sexual safety and responsibility (NPR 2010).

Research suggests that while government officials may still be debating about the content of sexual education in public schools, the majority of U.S. adults are not. Those who advocated abstinence-only programs may be the proverbial squeaky wheel when it comes to this controversy, since they represent only 15 percent of parents. Fifty-five percent of respondents feel giving teens information about sex and how to obtain and use protection will not encourage them to have sexual relations earlier than they would under an abstinence program. About 77 percent think such a curriculum would make teens more likely to practice safe sex now and in the future (NPR 2004).

Sweden, much advanced in sex education, can serve as a model for this approach. The teenage birthrate in Sweden is 7 per 1,000 births, compared

with 49 per 1,000 births in the U.S. Among 15 to 19 year olds, reported cases of sexually transmitted diseases in Sweden are nearly 600 times lower than in the United States (Grose 2007).

Sexuality Controversies

In his *Why Is Sex Fun?* (2004), Jared Diamond, an American ecologist, geologist, and anthropologist, suggests that human sexuality is so abnormal by the standards of the world's 30 million other animal species. Among other abnormal aspects, its main purpose may not be reproduction (to have a baby). Assume, for example, that 100 human couples had sex last night. How many of them do you think did it for reproduction?

Although sex, in terms of our biological difference between males and females, is nature, sex, in terms of bodily interactions involving genitals, is clearly not. It is cultural and social. As societies change, so does sexuality. In most societies today, for example, sexuality is personal. Right? But, very interestingly, whether human sexuality is originally/essentially personal or collective is hotly debated. Many anthropological studies report sexual customs (such as "ancient society," "primitive communism," and "partible paternity" discussed below) as functional strategies for collective survival while some contemporary psychologists depict people's desire for the preservation of personal genes.

Ancient Society

Prior to American anthropologist Lewis Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1985 [1877]), most scholars in the mainstream had presumed the ancient family system to be, just like now, patriarchal (i.e., male-centered) based on monogamy (one-to-one marriage). Through his plentiful field studies, contrary to this presumption, Morgan described the matriarchal (female-centered) arrangement prevailing in the ancient society together with the family (marriage) system evolving along the society evolving from the primitive to the more civilized (pp. 27-28). Below is a summary.

I. The Consanguine Family: the first form of the family founded upon the intermarriage of brothers and sisters in a group.

II. The Punaluan Family: the intermarriage of several brothers (or cousins) to each other's wives in a group; and of several sisters (cousins) to each other's husbands in a group.
III. The Syndyasmian Family: the pairing of a male with a female under the form of marriage, but without an exclusive cohabitation.
IV. The Patriarchal Family: the marriage of one man to several wives (called "polygyny" while the reverse system known as "polyandry" was also practiced in several societies until recently [will be discussed in Ch. 13]).
V. The Monogamian Family: the marriage of one man with one woman, with an exclusive cohabitation; the latter constituting the essential element of the institution.

Again, as societies change, so does sexuality.

American anthropologist Elman Service, who summarized ethnological issues debated mainly over Lewis Morgan's study in his *A Century of Controversy* (1985), wrote that "prominent… intellectuals were interested... [and] modified their own revolutionary theories in the light of Morgan's researches" (p. 16). Among others, Friedrich Engels was one of them (see below).

Primitive Communism
Thickly influenced by Lewis Morgan's study, Friedrich Engels, in his *The Origin of the Family*... (2004 [1884]), wrote that "at a primitive stage... promiscuous intercourse prevailed within a tribe, so that every woman belonged equally to every man" (p. 47). This was not immoral, but at that stage, even "the sister was the wife, and that was moral" (ibid., p. 57), the system which Morgan (1985 [1877]) called the Consanguine Family (see above). In hunting and gathering societies, according to Engels and many others, not just food but even sexual relations were equally shared by every member, and children belonged to all adults. As women bear children, such societies were matriarchal (female-centered).

Marx and Engels called this arrangement "primitive communism" in which our ancestors drastically enhanced chances for survival through cooperation, rather than competition, within their tribes. There was no personal property and, hence, no social stratification, meaning that all (men

and men; men and women; women and women) were equal (see Ch. 5, Society and Social Interaction). In this sense, sexuality is not just a means to reproduction but also a "means to solidarity."

Partible Paternity

When did our ancestors discover the relationship between sex and pregnancy? Evidently, some groups of people on this planet still don't know clearly about such relationship. When an anthropologist asked his Aché subject (a tribe in Paraguay) to identify their fathers, for example, 321 Aché claimed to have over six hundred fathers (Ryan et al. 2011, pp. 91-92). They believe that a fetus is made of accumulated semen, and that in order to have a good, healthy baby, women should have sex with two or more men, ideally, a smart guy, a funny guy, a physically strong guy, and so forth.

The anthropologists call this sexual custom "partible paternity." They observe that chances for survival of children who have two or more fathers is significantly better than children with just one father. Why? (Hint: "more protection," a latent function of this custom.)

The Preservation of Personal Genes

Some psychologists believe, by sharp contrast, that the function of sexuality is "the preservation of personal genes," rather than social solidarity or the latent function of protection. Called evolutionary psychology, their assumption is that both men and women try to preserve their own genes as efficiently as possible. As their anatomy and function are different, however, their strategies are also different, strategies that appear in their jealousy. According to David Buss et al. (2012), cues to emotional infidelity (love) are more salient to women and cues to sexual infidelity (sex) are more salient to men. Male and female jealousy adaptations contain sex-differentiated design features--paternity uncertainty for men, and resource and commitment diversion for women. Through a series of experiments, they test this assumption. Showing two cases (see below) to the participants, they ask: which do you think is more terribly upsetting to you?

A. Your partner falls in love with another person.
B. Your partner has sex with another person.

The results are: most female participants choose the case A to be more upsetting, and most male participants, the case B. The logic behind this is that for a woman, if her partner falls in love with another, he wouldn't come back to her, and she can't be protected by him. If so, her chances for survive can't be great, let alone her baby. For a man, conversely, if his partner has sex with another, he wouldn't be sure about if a new-born baby is truly his own. In the case A, the preservation of personal genes for women would fail. In the case B, that for men would fail.

Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Sexuality

Sociologists representing all three major theoretical perspectives study the role sexuality plays in social life today. Scholars recognize that sexuality continues to be an important and defining social location and that the manner in which sexuality is constructed has a significant effect on perceptions, interactions, and outcomes.

Structural Functionalism

When it comes to sexuality, functionalists stress the importance of regulating sexual behavior to ensure marital cohesion and family stability. Since functionalists identify the family unit as the most integral component in society, they maintain a strict focus on it at all times and argue in favor of social arrangements that promote and ensure family preservation.

Functionalists such as Talcott Parsons (1955) have long argued that the regulation of sexual activity is an important function of the family. Social norms surrounding family life have, traditionally, encouraged sexual activity within the family unit (marriage) and have discouraged activity outside of it (premarital and extramarital sex). From a functionalist point of view, the purpose of encouraging sexual activity in the confines of marriage is to intensify the bond between spouses and to ensure that procreation occurs within a stable, legally recognized relationship. This structure gives offspring the best possible chance for appropriate socialization and the provision of basic resources.

From a functionalist standpoint, homosexuality cannot be promoted on a large-scale as an acceptable substitute for heterosexuality. If this occurred, procreation would eventually cease. Thus, homosexuality, if occurring predominantly within the population, is dysfunctional to society. This criticism does not take into account the increasing legal acceptance of same-sex marriage, or the rise in gay and lesbian couples who choose to bear and raise children through a variety of available resources.

Conflict Theory

From a conflict theory perspective, sexuality is another area in which power differentials are present and where dominant groups actively work to promote their worldview as well as their economic interests. Recently, we have seen the debate over the legalization of gay marriage intensify nationwide.

For conflict theorists, there are two key dimensions to the debate over same-sex marriage—one ideological and the other economic. Dominant groups (in this instance, heterosexuals) wish for their worldview—which embraces traditional marriage and the nuclear family—to win out over what they see as the intrusion of a secular, individually driven worldview. On the other hand, many gay and lesbian activists argue that legal marriage is a fundamental right that cannot be denied based on sexual orientation and that, historically, there already exists a precedent for changes to marriage laws: the 1960s legalization of formerly forbidden interracial marriages is one example.

From an economic perspective, activists in favor of same-sex marriage point out that legal marriage brings with it certain entitlements, many of which are financial in nature, like Social Security benefits and medical insurance (Solmonese 2008). Denial of these benefits to gay couples is wrong, they argue. Conflict theory suggests that as long as heterosexuals and homosexuals struggle over these social and financial resources, there will be some degree of conflict.

Symbolic Interactionism

Interactionists focus on the meanings associated with sexuality and with sexual orientation. Since femininity is devalued in U.S. society, those who adopt such traits are subject to ridicule; this is especially true for boys or men. Just as masculinity is the symbolic norm, so too has heterosexuality come to signify normalcy. Prior to 1973, as mentioned earlier, the American Psychological Association (APA) defined homosexuality as an abnormal or deviant disorder. Interactionist labeling theory recognizes the impact this has made. Before 1973, the APA was powerful in shaping social attitudes toward homosexuality by defining it as pathological. Today, the APA cites no association between sexual orientation and psychopathology and sees homosexuality as a normal aspect of human sexuality (APA 2008).

Interactionists are also interested in how discussions of homosexuals often focus almost exclusively on the sex lives of gays and lesbians; homosexuals, especially men, may be assumed to be hypersexual and, in some cases, deviant. Interactionism might also focus on the slurs used to describe homosexuals. Labels such as “queen” and “fag” are often used to demean homosexual men by feminizing them. This subsequently affects how homosexuals perceive themselves. Recall Cooley’s “looking-glass self,” which suggests that self develops as a result of our interpretation and evaluation of the responses of others (Cooley 1902). Constant exposure to derogatory labels, jokes, and pervasive homophobia would lead to a negative self-image, or worse, self-hate. The CDC reports that homosexual youths who experience high levels of social rejection are six times more likely to have high levels of depression and eight times more likely to have attempted suicide (CDC 2011).

Queer Theory

Queer Theory is an interdisciplinary approach to sexuality studies that identifies Western society’s rigid splitting of gender into male and female roles and questions the manner in which we have been taught to think about sexual orientation. According to Jagose (1996), Queer [Theory] focuses on mismatches between anatomical sex, gender identity, and sexual

orientation, not just division into male/female or homosexual/hetereosexual. By calling their discipline “queer,” scholars reject the effects of labeling; instead, they embraced the word “queer” and reclaimed it for their own purposes. The perspective highlights the need for a more flexible and fluid conceptualization of sexuality—one that allows for change, negotiation, and freedom. The current schema used to classify individuals as either “heterosexual” or “homosexual” pits one orientation against the other. This mirrors other oppressive schemas in our culture, especially those surrounding gender and race (black versus white, male versus female).

Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued against U.S. society’s monolithic definition of sexuality and its reduction to a single factor: the sex of someone’s desired partner. Sedgwick identified dozens of other ways in which people’s sexualities were different, such as:

- Even identical genital acts mean very different things to different people.
- Sexuality makes up a large share of the self-perceived identity of some people, a small share of others’.
- Some people spend a lot of time thinking about sex, others little.
- Some people like to have a lot of sex, others little or none.
- Many people have their richest mental/emotional involvement with sexual acts that they don’t do, or don’t even want to do.
- Some people like spontaneous sexual scenes, others like highly scripted ones, others like spontaneous-sounding ones that are nonetheless totally predictable.
- Some people, homo- hetero- and bisexual, experience their sexuality as deeply embedded in a matrix of gender meanings and gender differentials. Others of each sexuality do not (Sedgwick 1990).

Thus, theorists utilizing queer theory strive to question the ways society perceives and experiences sex, gender, and sexuality, opening the door to new scholarly understanding.

Throughout this chapter we have examined the complexities of gender, sex, and sexuality. Differentiating between sex, gender, and sexual orientation is an important first step to a deeper understanding and critical analysis of these issues. Understanding the sociology of sex, gender, and sexuality will

help to build awareness of the inequalities experienced by subordinate categories such as women, homosexuals, and transgender individuals.

Summary

When studying sex and sexuality, sociologists focus their attention on sexual attitudes and practices, not on physiology or anatomy. Norms regarding gender and sexuality vary across cultures. In general, the United States tends to be fairly conservative in its sexual attitudes. As a result, homosexuals continue to face opposition and discrimination in most major social institutions.

Further Research

For more information about sexual attitudes and practices in countries around the world, see the entire "Attitudes Toward Nonmarital Sex in 24 Countries" article from the *Journal of Sex Research* at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/journal_of_sex_research.

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Glossary

double standard
: the concept that prohibits premarital sexual intercourse for women but allows it for men

queer theory
: an interdisciplinary approach to sexuality studies that identifies Western society's rigid splitting of gender into male and female roles and questions its appropriateness

sexuality
: a person's capacity for sexual feelings

Introduction to Marriage and Family
class="introduction"

What constitutes a family nowadays? (Photo courtesy of Michael/flickr)

Between 2006 and 2010, nearly half of heterosexual women (48 percent) ages fifteen to forty-four said they were not married to their spouse or

partner when they first lived with them, the report says. That's up from 43 percent in 2002, and 34 percent in 1995 (Rettner 2013). The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the number of unmarried couples has grown from fewer than one million in the 1970s to 8.1 million in 2011. Cohabitating, but unwed, couples account for 10 percent of all opposite-sex couples in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). Some may never choose to wed (Gardner 2013). With fewer couples marrying, the traditional U.s. family structure is becoming less common.

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What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

- Describe society’s current understanding of family
- Recognize changes in marriage and family patterns
- Differentiate between lines of decent and residence

The modern concept of family is far more encompassing than in past decades. What do you think constitutes a family? (Photo (a) courtesy Gareth Williams/flickr; photo (b) courtesy Guillaume Paumier/ Wikimedia Commons)

Marriage and family are key units in all societies although their forms vary across societies and change over time. While the two institutions are closely linked in American culture, indeed, their connection is changing in somewhat complicated ways, as seen in cohabitation, same-sex marriage, same-sex households, divorce, single-parent families, and so on.

Marriage is defined in different eras and areas in different ways. In the U.S. today, specifically, it is a legally recognized union between two people, based on a sexual relationship and rights and obligations between them. It's a union "between two people," and doesn't have to be "between a man and a woman" since 2015, in which the Supreme Court supported the constitutional right to same-sex marriage.

Family in our modern societies is defined as a socially recognized group (usually joined by blood, marriage, cohabitation, or adoption) that forms an emotional connection among its members and serves as an economic unit. There are two different types of families based on a person's status in them. One is a "family of orientation" in which a person was born and grew up as a child. The other is a "family of procreation" in which a person is a parent and raises his/her kid(s). Many adults live in their family of procreation with their kid(s) and visit their family of orientation once in a while to see their mom and/or dad.

One Partner or Two or More

In almost all modern societies, **monogamy** (i.e., one-to-one marriage) is socially and legally maintained. In many other societies around the world, however, this one-to-one union is not the only form of marriage. A majority of cultures (78%) practice **polygamy**, or being married at a time to two or more spouses who know about each other (Murdock 1967).

The word "polygamy" has two parts. "Poly" means two or more and "gamy," marriage. Thus, it's a marriage that involves more than two spouses at the same time. According to Friedrich Engels (2004 [1884]) and Lewis Morgan (1985 [1877]) (as discussed in Ch. 12), all our ancestors long, long ago engaged in polygamy between brothers and sisters, between cousins, and so on. It was a cultural and collective custom mostly for *social solidarity*, as opposed to a personal or private habit for secret desire.

Within polygamy practiced in our contemporary world now, or until the recent past, there are mostly two types: polygyny and polyandry. **Polygyny**, where "gyny" means female, is a form of marriage in which a guy has two or more wives at the same time. Some Islamic countries are known to practice this form of marriage.

Polyandry, where "andry" means male, is another form of marriage in which a woman has two or more husbands at the same time. This was practiced in many areas on this planet, such as Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. To be noted, in many cases called "fraternal polyandry,"

husbands who share one wife are biological brothers. There are several reasons for this cultural custom.

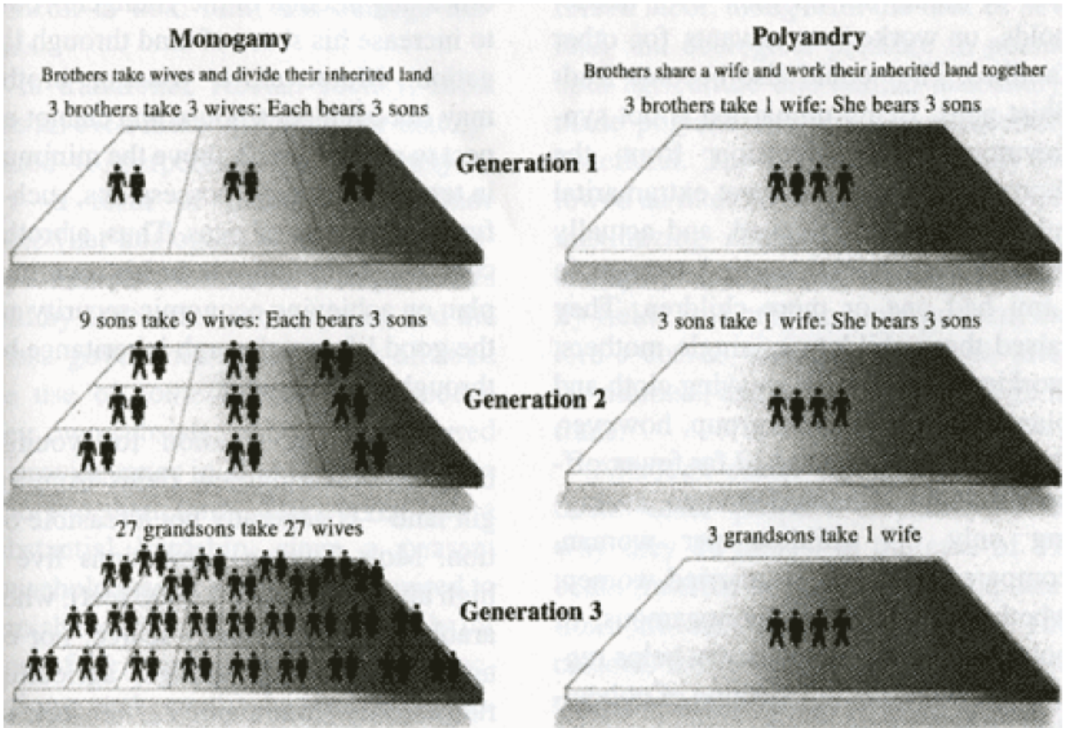
First, many societies, in which resources were scarce, used to practice "infanticide" (newborn baby killing), and girls were usually more likely to be killed than boys who would support their families in the future. In a tribe where polyandry was practiced, indeed, "Though there is seemingly no absolute rule in predicting female infanticide, should three consecutive births be female, the last one would inevitably be killed" (Peters et al. 1975, p. 201). As a result, not just in each household, but also in the entire society, the gender ratio became unbalanced. This condition made it very difficult for each boy to have a wife of his own.

Second, they were mostly farmers facing "hardships where cooperative work among brothers is essential for survival" (ibid., p. 198). Rather than dividing their land by the number of brothers, therefore, farming the entire land together is economically more efficient and socially more solid.

Third, as brothers completely shared properties in their family, it was not necessary for them to specify who the father of a newborn baby was; all properties were handed over to all children in their family, equally (ibid., p. 198).

Fourth, as their societies didn't have a plenty of resources, the size of the population had to be controlled. Compared to monogamy, polyandry is way more effective to this end (see below).

One of the Major Functions of Polyandry: Controlling the Population



Okay, that's logical. But what about jealousy? How would you feel when you know one of your brothers is having sex with the wife you guys share?

Don't worry. If you were born and grew up in such societies, you would join polyandry, or even infanticide. That's culture.

There is a term known as **flintstonization**, based on an American cartoon *The Flintstones* broadcast in the 1960s. It refers to the erroneous attempt to understand the distant past or culture through the lens of the norms and values of one's own society. It's somewhat similar to ethnocentrism, the fallacious tendency to evaluate other cultures through the lens of one's own culture. In a family of polyandry, did the husbands also share one single cellphone, or did they each have one? Oh, no, no, there was no cellphone back then. This is an example of flintstonization.

Residency and Lines of Descent

When considering one’s lineage, most people in the United States look to both their father’s and mother’s sides. Both paternal and maternal ancestors are considered part of one’s family. This pattern of tracing kinship is called

bilateral descent. Note that **kinship**, or one's traceable ancestry, can be based on blood or marriage or adoption. Sixty percent of societies, mostly modernized nations, follow a bilateral descent pattern. **Unilateral descent** (the tracing of kinship through one parent only) is practiced in the other 40 percent of the world's societies, with high concentration in pastoral cultures (O'Neal 2006).

There are three types of unilateral descent: **patrilineal**, which follows the father's line only; **matrilineal**, which follows the mother's side only; and **ambilineal**, which follows either the father's only or the mother's side only, depending on the situation. In partrilineal societies, such as those in rural China and India, only males carry on the family surname. This gives males the prestige of permanent family membership while females are seen as only temporary members (Harrell 2001). U.S. society assumes some aspects of partrilineal decent. For instance, most children assume their father's last name even if the mother retains her birth name.

In matrilineal societies, inheritance and family ties are traced to women. Matrilineal descent is common in Native American societies, notably the Crow and Cherokee tribes. In these societies, children are seen as belonging to the women and, therefore, one's kinship is traced to one's mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and so on (Mails 1996). In ambilineal societies, which are most common in Southeast Asian countries, parents may choose to associate their children with the kinship of either the mother or the father. This choice maybe based on the desire to follow stronger or more prestigious kinship lines or on cultural customs such as men following their father's side and women following their mother's side (Lambert 2009).

Tracing one's line of descent to one parent rather than the other can be relevant to the issue of residence. In many cultures, newly married couples move in with, or near to, family members. In a **patrilocal residence** system it is customary for the wife to live with (or near) her husband's blood relatives (or family or orientation). Patrilocal systems can be traced back thousands of years. In a DNA analysis of 4,600-year-old bones found in Germany, scientists found indicators of patrilocal living arrangements (Haak et al 2008). Patrilocal residence is thought to be disadvantageous to

women because it makes them outsiders in the home and community; it also keeps them disconnected from their own blood relatives. In China, where patrilocal and patrilineal customs are common, the written symbols for maternal grandmother (*wáipá*) are separately translated to mean “outsider” and “women” (Cohen 2011).

Similarly, in **matrilocal residence** systems, where it is customary for the husband to live with his wife’s blood relatives (or her family of orientation), the husband can feel disconnected and can be labeled as an outsider. The Minangkabau people, a matrilocal society that is indigenous to the highlands of West Sumatra in Indonesia, believe that home is the place of women and they give men little power in issues relating to the home or family (Joseph and Najmabadi 2003). Most societies that use patrilocal and patrilineal systems are patriarchal, but very few societies that use matrilocal and matrilineal systems are matriarchal, as family life is often considered an important part of the culture for women, regardless of their power relative to men.

Stages of Family Life

As we’ve established, the concept of family has changed greatly in recent decades. Historically, it was often thought that many families evolved through a series of predictable stages. Developmental or “stage” theories used to play a prominent role in family sociology (Strong and DeVault 1992). Today, however, these models have been criticized for their linear and conventional assumptions as well as for their failure to capture the diversity of family forms. While reviewing some of these once-popular theories, it is important to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

The set of predictable steps and patterns families experience over time is referred to as the **family life cycle**. One of the first designs of the family life cycle was developed by Paul Glick in 1955. In Glick’s original design, he asserted that most people will grow up, establish families, rear and launch their children, experience an “empty nest” period, and come to the end of their lives. This cycle will then continue with each subsequent generation (Glick 1989). Glick’s colleague, Evelyn Duvall, elaborated on the family

life cycle by developing these classic stages of family (Strong and DeVault 1992):

Stage	Family Type	Children
1	Marriage Family	Childless
2	Procreation Family	Children ages 0 to 2.5
3	Preschooler Family	Children ages 2.5 to 6
4	School-age Family	Children ages 6–13
5	Teenage Family	Children ages 13–20
6	Launching Family	Children begin to leave home
7	Empty Nest Family	“Empty nest”; adult children have left home

Stage TheoryThis table shows one example of how a “stage” theory might categorize the phases a family goes through.

The family life cycle was used to explain the different processes that occur in families over time. Sociologists view each stage as having its own structure with different challenges, achievements, and accomplishments that transition the family from one stage to the next. For example, the problems

and challenges that a family experiences in Stage 1 as a married couple with no children are likely much different than those experienced in Stage 5 as a married couple with teenagers. The success of a family can be measured by how well they adapt to these challenges and transition into each stage. While sociologists use the family life cycle to study the dynamics of family overtime, consumer and marketing researchers have used it to determine what goods and services families need as they progress through each stage (Murphy and Staples 1979).

As early "stage" theories have been criticized for generalizing family life and not accounting for differences in gender, ethnicity, culture, and lifestyle, less rigid models of the family life cycle have been developed. One example is the **family life course**, which recognizes the events that occur in the lives of families but views them as parting terms of a fluid course rather than in consecutive stages (Strong and DeVault 1992). This type of model accounts for changes in family development, such as the fact that in today's society, childbearing does not always occur with marriage. It also sheds light on other shifts in the way family life is practiced. Society's modern understanding of family rejects rigid "stage" theories and is more accepting of new, fluid models.

Note:

The Evolution of Television Families

Whether you grew up watching the Cleavers, the Waltons, the Huxtables, or the Simpsons, most of the iconic families you saw in television sitcoms included a father, a mother, and children cavorting under the same roof while comedy ensued. The 1960s was the height of the suburban U.S. nuclear family on television with shows such as *The Donna Reed Show* and *Father Knows Best*. While some shows of this era portrayed single parents (*My Three Sons* and *Bonanza*, for instance), the single status almost always resulted from being widowed—not divorced or unwed.

Although family dynamics in real U.S. homes were changing, the expectations for families portrayed on television were not. The United States' first reality show, *An American Family* (which aired on PBS in 1973) chronicled Bill and Pat Loud and their children as a "typical" U.S.

family. During the series, the oldest son, Lance, announced to the family that he was gay, and at the series' conclusion, Bill and Pat decided to divorce. Although the Loud's union was among the 30 percent of marriages that ended in divorce in 1973, the family was featured on the cover of the March 12 issue of *Newsweek* with the title "The Broken Family" (Ruoff 2002).

Less traditional family structures in sitcoms gained popularity in the 1980s with shows such as *Diff'rent Strokes* (a widowed man with two adopted African American sons) and *One Day at a Time* (a divorced woman with two teenage daughters). Still, traditional families such as those in *Family Ties* and *The Cosby Show* dominated the ratings. The late 1980s and the 1990s saw the introduction of the dysfunctional family. Shows such as *Roseanne*, *Married with Children*, and *The Simpsons* portrayed traditional nuclear families, but in a much less flattering light than those from the 1960s did (Museum of Broadcast Communications 2011).

Over the past ten years, the nontraditional family has become somewhat of a tradition in television. While most situation comedies focus on single men and women without children, those that do portray families often stray from the classic structure: they include unmarried and divorced parents, adopted children, gay couples, and multigenerational households. Even those that do feature traditional family structures may show less-traditional characters in supporting roles, such as the brothers in the highly rated shows *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *Two and Half Men*. Even wildly popular children's programs as Disney's *Hannah Montana* and *The Suite Life of Zack & Cody* feature single parents.

In 2009, ABC premiered an intensely nontraditional family with the broadcast of *Modern Family*. The show follows an extended family that includes a divorced and remarried father with one stepchild, and his biological adult children—one of who is in a traditional two-parent household, and the other who is a gay man in a committed relationship raising an adopted daughter. While this dynamic may be more complicated than the typical "modern" family, its elements may resonate with many of today's viewers. "The families on the shows aren't as idealistic, but they remain relatable," states television critic Maureen Ryan. "The most successful shows, comedies especially, have families that you can look at and see parts of your family in them" (Respers France 2010).

Summary

Sociologists view marriage and families as societal institutions that help create the basic unit of social structure. Both marriage and a family may be defined differently—and practiced differently—in cultures across the world. Families and marriages, like other institutions, adapt to social change.

Further Research

For more information on family development and lines of descent, visit the New England Historical Genealogical Society's web site, American Ancestors, and find out how genealogies have been established and recorded since 1845. http://openstaxcollege.org/l/American_Ancestors

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Glossary

ambilineal
: a type of unilateral descent that follows either the father’s or the mother’s side exclusively

bilateral descent
: the tracing of kinship through both parents’ ancestral lines

bigamy
: the act of entering into marriage while still married to another person

cohabitation
: the act of a couple sharing a residence while they are not married

family
: socially recognized groups of individuals who may be joined by blood, marriage, or adoption and who form an emotional connection and an economic unit of society

family life course
: a sociological model of family that sees the progression of events as fluid rather than as occurring in strict stages

family life cycle

a set of predictable steps and patterns families experience over time

family of orientation
the family into which one is born

family of procreation
a family that is formed through marriage

kinship
a person’s traceable ancestry (by blood, marriage, and/or adoption)

marriage
a legally recognized contract between two or more people in a sexual relationship who have an expectation of permanence about their relationship

matrilineal descent
a type of unilateral descent that follows the mother’s side only

matrilocal residence
a system in which it is customary for a husband to live with the his wife’s family

monogamy
the act of being married to only one person at a time

patrilineal descent
a type of unilateral descent that follows the father’s line only

patrilocal residence
a system in which it is customary for the a wife to live with (or near) the her husband’s family

polyandry
a form of marriage in which one woman is married to more than one man at one time

polygamy

the state of being committed or married to more than one person at a time

polygyny
: a form of marriage in which one man is married to more than one woman at one time

unilateral descent
: the tracing of kinship through one parent only.

Variations in Family Life

- Recognize variations in family life
- Understand the prevalence of single parents, cohabitation, same-sex couples, and unmarried individuals
- Discuss the social impact of changing family structures

Almost all Americans (99.8%) believe that a family consists of husband, wife, and children, but this doesn't necessarily represent their own families. According to 2010 census data, indeed, only 66% of children under 17 years old live in a type of families called a **nuclear family** structured upon both parents, their kid(s), and no one else. This is a decrease from 77% in 1980 (U.S. Census 2011). Recent years have seen a rise in variations of the nuclear family with the parents not being married; 3% of children live with cohabiting parents (U.S. Census 2011).

Nuclear families are a relatively new development in industrialized societies, in which most jobs are not attached to the land. In search of new jobs if necessary, indeed, factory workers need to be able to move from one place to another. The size of families, thus, became smaller compared to that in agricultural societies. Before the mode of economy shifted from agricultural to industrial, people, mostly farmers, lived in **extended families**, which included aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and so on. Children didn't distinguish between brothers/sisters and cousins, calling their cousins "my brother" or "my sister," and that was completely okay.

Other than nuclear families and extended families in traditional forms, there are several different types of families (or non-families) growing today. In this section discussed are: "single-parent families," "cohabitation," "same-sex couples," and "staying single."

More than one quarter of U.S. children live in a single-parent household. (Photo courtesy of Ross Griff/flickr)

Single-Parent Families

Single-parent families are on the rise after the 1960s, straightforward. In 2017, 27% of children lived with a single parent only, up from 20% in 1980, and 12% in 1970 (US Census 2017). Most of the single-families (85%) are female-headed.

Stepparents are an additional family element in two-parent homes. Among children living in two-parent households, 9% live with a biological or adoptive parent and a stepparent. The majority (70%) of those children live with their biological mother and a stepfather. Family structure has been shown to vary with the age of the child. Older children (15 to 17 years old) are less likely to live with two parents than adolescent children (6 to 14 years old) or young children (0 to 5 years old). Older children who do live

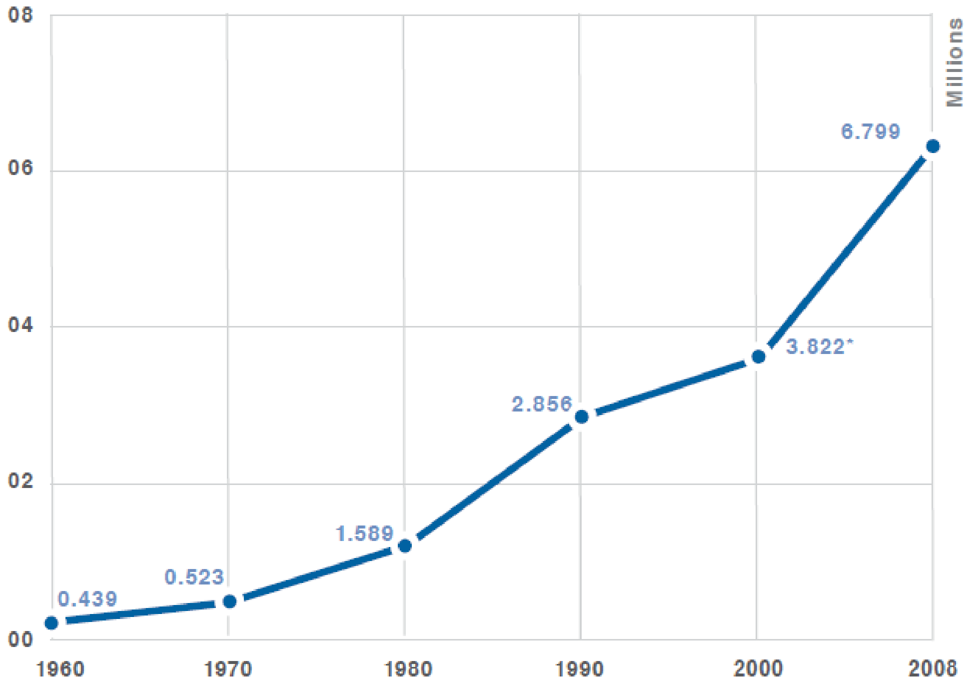
with two parents are also more likely to live with stepparents (U.S. Census 2011).

In some family structures a parent is not present at all. In 2017, nearly three million children (4% of all children) didn't have a parent. Of these children, 54% live with grandparents, 21% live with other relatives, and 24% live with nonrelatives. Foster parents account for about a quarter of nonrelatives. The practice of grandparents acting as parents, whether alone or in combination with the child's parent, is becoming widespread today (De Toledo and Brown 1995). Nine percent of all children live with a grandparent, and in nearly half those cases, the grandparent maintains primary responsibility for the child (U.S. Census 2011). A grandparent functioning as the primary care provider often results from parental drug abuse, incarceration, or abandonment. Events like these can render the parent incapable of caring for his or her child.

Cohabitation

Living together without being married is a growing option for many couples in the U.S., after the 1960s. Called **cohabitation**, it is a living arrangement set between two unmarried individuals in a sexual relationship. In 2016, the number of such cohabitants in the U.S. was estimated to be 18 million in 2016, an increase by 29% since 2007 (U.S. Census 2017).

Cohabitation Trends in the U.S., 1960-2008



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P20-537; America's Families and Living Arrangements: March 2000; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division, Current Population Survey, 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2008.html).

In the 1960s, many big events took place in the U.S., such as the Civil Rights Movement, the counterculture movement, the feminist movement, the hippie movement, and so on. Fed up with the Vietnam War showing no end in sight, younger generations began resisting the traditionally perpetuated conservative culture, for the first time in the U.S. history. Muhammad Ali, then heavy weight champion of the world, refused to be inducted into the U.S. Army, saying, “I ain’t got no quarrel with them Vietcong. No Vietcong ever called me nigger" (New York Times 2016).

Until then, premarital sex had been unthinkable, viewed as the violation of not a norm, but a taboo. Triggered by such defiant social atmospheres, however, younger generations began violating the taboo, actively. This trend was called the "sex revolution." Those who joined this revolution were, no wonder, encountered by social punishments, such as losing their jobs, loosing support money, and being denied housing, as just a few

examples (Pleck 2012). As the data above show us, nonetheless, the revolution was unstoppable.

Cohabitating couples may choose to live together in an effort to spend more time together or to save money on living costs. Many couples view cohabitation as a “trial run” for marriage. Today, approximately 28% of men and women cohabitated before their first marriage (U.S. Census 2010). The majority of cohabitating relationships eventually result in marriage; only 15% of men and women who cohabitate do not marry. About a half of cohabitants get married within 3 years (U.S. Census 2010).

While couples may use this time to “work out the kinks” of a relationship before they wed, the most recent research has found that cohabitation has little effect on the success of a marriage. In fact, those who do not cohabitate before marriage have slightly better rates of remaining married for more than ten years (Jayson 2010). Cohabitation may contribute to the increase in the number of men and women who delay marriage. The median age for marriage keeps going up—age 26 for women and age 28 for men (U.S. Census 2010).

Same-Sex Couples

The number of same-sex couples has grown significantly in the past decade, especially after the U.S. Supreme Court supported the constitutional right to same-sex marriage in 2015. In 2010, the number of same-sex couple households (whether married or not) was 594,000, compared to 887,456 in 2016 (U.S. Census 2017). This newly legalized trend can be seen as a sort of another sex revolution.

It is very interesting to see that, of the children in same-sex couple households, 73% are biological children (of only one of the parents), 21% are adopted only, and 6% are a combination of biological and adopted (U.S. Census 2009). This tells us, evidently, that some people change their sexual orientation from one to another, i.e., from heterosexual to homosexual, and vice versa.

While there is some concern from socially conservative groups regarding the well-being of children who grow up in same-sex households, research reports that same-sex parents are as effective as opposite-sex parents. In an analysis of 81 parenting studies, sociologists found no quantifiable data to support the notion that opposite-sex parenting is any better than same-sex parenting. Children of lesbian couples, however, were shown to have slightly lower rates of behavioral problems and higher rates of self-esteem (Biblarz and Stacey 2010).

Staying Single

Gay or straight, a new option for many people in the United States is simply to stay single. In 2010, there were 99.6 million unmarried individuals over age 18 in the United States, accounting for 44% of the total adult population (U.S. Census 2011). In 2010, among people aged between 25 and 29, 62% of women and 48% of men said they had never married, up from 11% and 19%, respectively, in 1970 (U.S. Census 2011). Single, or never-married, individuals are found in higher concentrations in large cities or metropolitan areas, with New York City being one of the highest.

Although both single men and single women report social pressure to get married, women are still subject to greater scrutiny. Single women are often portrayed as unhappy “spinsters” or “old maids” who cannot find a man to marry them. Single men, on the other hand, are typically portrayed as lifetime bachelors who cannot settle down or simply “have not found the right girl.” Single women report feeling insecure and displaced in their families when their single status is disparaged (Roberts 2007).

However, single women older than 35 years old report feeling secure and happy with their unmarried status, as many women in this category have found success in their education and careers. In general, women feel more independent and more prepared to live a large portion of their adult lives without a spouse or domestic partner than they did in the 1960s (Roberts 2007).

The decision to marry or not to marry can be based a variety of factors including religion and cultural expectations. Asian individuals are the most

likely to marry while African Americans are the least likely to marry (Venugopal 2011). Additionally, individuals who place no value on religion are more likely to be unmarried than those who place a high value on religion. For black women, however, the importance of religion made no difference in marital status (Bakalar 2010). In general, being single is not a rejection of marriage; rather, it is a lifestyle that does not necessarily include marriage. By age 40, according to census figures, 20% of women and 14 of men will have never married (U.S. Census Bureau 2011).

More and more people in the United States are choosing lifestyles that don’t include marriage. (Photo courtesy of Glenn Harper/flickr)

Theoretical Perspectives on Marriage and Family

Sociologists study families on both the macro and micro level to determine how families function. Sociologists may use a variety of theoretical perspectives to explain events that occur within and outside of the family.

Functionalism

When considering the role of family in society, functionalists uphold the notion that families are an important social institution and that they play a key role in stabilizing society. They also note that family members take on status roles in a marriage or family. The family—and its members—perform certain functions that facilitate the prosperity and development of society.

Sociologist George Murdock conducted a survey of 250 societies and determined that there are four universal residual functions of the family: sexual, reproductive, educational, and economic (Lee 1985). According to Murdock, the family (which for him includes the state of marriage) regulates sexual relations between individuals. He does not deny the existence or impact of premarital or extramarital sex, but states that the family offers a socially legitimate sexual outlet for adults (Lee 1985). This outlet gives way to reproduction, which is a necessary part of ensuring the survival of society.

Once children are produced, the family plays a vital role in training them for adult life. As the primary agent of socialization and enculturation, the family teaches young children the ways of thinking and behaving that follow social and cultural norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes. Parents teach their children manners and civility. A well-mannered child reflects a well-mannered parent.

Parents also teach children gender roles. Gender roles are an important part of the economic function of a family. In each family, there is a division of labor that consists of instrumental and expressive roles. Men tend to assume the instrumental roles in the family, which typically involve work outside of the family that provides financial support and establishes family status. Women tend to assume the expressive roles, which typically involve work inside of the family which provides emotional support and physical care for children (Crano and Aronoff 1978). According to functionalists, the differentiation of the roles on the basis of sex ensures that families are well balanced and coordinated. When family members move outside of these roles, the family is thrown out of balance and must recalibrate in order to function properly. For example, if the father assumes an expressive role such as providing daytime care for the children, the mother must take on an

instrumental role such as gaining paid employment outside of the home in order for the family to maintain balance and function.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists are quick to point out that U.S. families have been defined as private entities, the consequence of which has been to leave family matters to only those within the family. Many people in the United States are resistant to government intervention in the family: parents do not want the government to tell them how to raise their children or to become involved in domestic issues. Conflict theory highlights the role of power in family life and contends that the family is often not a haven but rather an arena where power struggles can occur. This exercise of power often entails the performance of family status roles. Conflict theorists may study conflicts as simple as the enforcement of rules from parent to child, or they may examine more serious issues such as domestic violence (spousal and child), sexual assault, marital rape, and incest.

The first study of marital power was performed in 1960. Researchers found that the person with the most access to value resources held the most power. As money is one of the most valuable resources, men who worked in paid labor outside of the home held more power than women who worked inside the home (Blood and Wolfe 1960). Conflict theorists find disputes over the division of household labor to be a common source of marital discord. Household labor offers no wages and, therefore, no power. Studies indicate that when men do more housework, women experience more satisfaction in their marriages, reducing the incidence of conflict (Coltrane 2000). In general, conflict theorists tend to study areas of marriage and life that involve inequalities or discrepancies in power and authority, as they are reflective of the larger social structure.

Symbolic Interactionism

Interactionists view the world in terms of symbols and the meanings assigned to them (LaRossa and Reitzes 1993). The family itself is a symbol. To some, it is a father, mother, and children; to others, it is any union that involves respect and compassion. Interactionists stress that family is not an objective, concrete reality. Like other social phenomena, it is a social construct that is subject to the ebb and flow of social norms and ever-changing meanings.

Consider the meaning of other elements of family: “parent” was a symbol of a biological and emotional connection to a child; with more parent-child relationships developing through adoption, remarriage, or change in guardianship, the word “parent” today is less likely to be associated with a biological connection than with whoever is socially recognized as having the responsibility for a child’s upbringing. Similarly, the terms “mother” and “father” are no longer rigidly associated with the meanings of caregiver and breadwinner. These meanings are more free-flowing through changing family roles.

Interactionists also recognize how the family status roles of each member are socially constructed, playing an important part in how people perceive and interpret social behavior. Interactionists view the family as a group of role players or “actors” that come together to act out their parts in an effort to construct a family. These roles are up for interpretation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a “good father,” for example, was one who worked hard to provided financial security for his children. Today, a “good father” is one who takes the time outside of work to promote his children’s emotional well-being, social skills, and intellectual growth—in some ways, a much more daunting task.

Summary

People's concepts of marriage and family in the United States are changing. Increases in cohabitation, same-sex partners, and singlehood are altering of our ideas of marriage. Similarly, single parents, same-sex parents, cohabitating parents, and unwed parents are changing our notion of what it means to be a family. While most children still live in opposite-sex, two-

parent, married households, that is no longer viewed as the only type of nuclear family.

Further Research

For more statistics on marriage and family, see the Forum on Child and Family Statistics at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/child_family_statistics, as well as the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey, and the U.S. Census decennial survey at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/US_Census.

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Glossary

extended family
: a household that includes at least one parent and child as well as other relatives like grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins

nuclear family
: two parents (traditionally a married husband and wife) and children living in the same household

Challenges Families Face

- Understand the social and interpersonal impact of divorce
- Describe the social and interpersonal impact of family abuse

As the structure of family changes over time, so do the challenges families face. Events like divorce and remarriage present new difficulties for families and individuals. Other long-standing domestic issues such as abuse continue to strain the health and stability of today's families.

Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce, while fairly common and accepted in modern U.S. society, was once a word that would only be whispered and was accompanied by gestures of disapproval. In 1960, before the defiant trend discussed above, divorce was generally uncommon, affecting only 9.1 out of every 1,000 married persons, less than 1%. That number more than doubled (to 20.3 or 2.03%) by 1975 and peaked in 1980 at 22.6, 2.26% (Popenoe 2007). Over the last quarter century, divorce rates have dropped steadily and are now similar to those in 1970. The dramatic increase in divorce rates after the 1960s has been associated with the liberalization of divorce laws, as well as the shift in societal makeup due to women increasingly entering the workforce (Michael 1978). The decrease in divorce rates can be attributed to two probable factors: an increase in the age at which people get married, and an increased level of education among those who marry—both of which have been found to promote greater marital stability.

What Reduces the Risk of Divorce?

Factors That Reduce People's Chances of Divorce	How Much Does This Decrease the Risk of Divorce?
Some college (vs. high school dropout)	−13%
Affiliated with a religion (vs. none)	−14%
Parents not divorced	−14%
Age 25 or over at marriage (vs. under 18)	−24%
Having a baby 7 months or longer after marriage (vs. before marriage)	−24%
Annual income over $25,000 (vs. under $25,000)	−30%

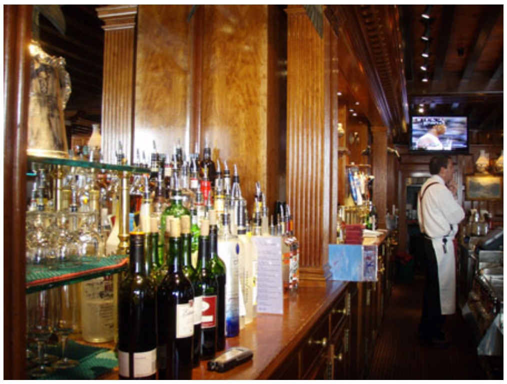
Note: These percentages apply to the first ten years of marriage.
Source: Whitehead and Popenoe 2004; Copen et al. 2012.

As shown above, several factors (independent variables) can reduce the risk of divorce (the dependent variable).

- First, college degree holders are less likely to divorce than high school dropouts, by 13%. Education makes a difference.
- Second, those who are affiliated to religious organizations are less likely to divorce than those who are not, by 14%. Religions discourage divorce.
- Third, those whose parents didn't experience divorce are less likely to divorce than those whose parents did, by 14%. Parents influence their children.
- Fourth, those who were 25 years old or older when married are less likely to divorce than those who were younger when married, by 24%. Maturity also makes a difference.
- Fifth, those who got a baby as a result of marriage are less likely to divorce than those who got a baby before marriage, by 24%.
- Sixth, those whose annual income is over $25,000 are less likely to divorce than those whose income is under that, by 30%.

Many factors other than above also affect the risk of divorce. The addition of children to a marriage, for example, creates added financial and emotional stress. Research has established that marriages enter their most stressful phase upon the birth of the first child (Popenoe and Whitehead 2007). This is particularly true for couples who have multiples (twins, triplets, and so on). Married couples with twins or triplets are 17% more

likely to divorce than those with children from single births (McKay 2010). Another contributor to the likelihood of divorce is a general decline in marital satisfaction over time. As people get older, they may find that their values and life goals no longer match up with those of their spouse (Popenoe and Whitehead 2004).



A study from Radford University indicated that bartenders are among the professions with the highest divorce rates (38.4%). Other traditionally low-wage industries (like restaurant service, custodial employment, and factory work) are also associated with higher divorce rates. (Aamodt and McCoy 2010). (Photo courtesy of Daniel Lobo/flickr)

The vast majority (91%) of remarriages occur after divorce; only 9% occur after death of a spouse (Kreider 2006). Most men and women remarry

within five years of a divorce, with the median length for men (3 years) being shorter than for women (4.4 years). This length of time has been fairly consistent since the 1950s. The majority of those who remarry are between the ages of 25 and 44 (Kreider 2006). The general pattern of remarriage also shows that whites are more likely to remarry than black Americans.

Marriage the second time around (or third or fourth) can be a very different process than the first. Remarriage lacks many of the classic courtship rituals of a first marriage. In a second marriage, individuals are less likely to deal with issues like parental approval, premarital sex, or desired family size (Elliot 2010). In a survey of households formed by remarriage, a mere 8% included only biological children of the remarried couple. Of the 49% of homes that include children, 24% included only the woman's biological children, 3% included only the man's biological children, and 9% included a combination of both spouse's children (U.S. Census 2006).

Past statistics have shown that divorce rates for one increase as the number of one's own marriages increases. In the U.S., that is, nearly 50% of first marriages, 67% of second, and 73% of third marriages end in divorce (Presser 2017, p. 53). Isn't it strange that as one experiences more, he/she will become more likely to fail than before?

Children of Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce and remarriage can been stressful on partners and children alike. Divorce is often justified by the notion that children are better off in a divorced family than in a family with parents who do not get along. However, long-term studies determine that to be generally untrue. Research suggests that while marital conflict does not provide an ideal childrearing environment, going through a divorce can be damaging. Children are often confused and frightened by the threat to their family security. They may feel responsible for the divorce and attempt to bring their parents back together, often by sacrificing their own well-being (Amato 2000). Only in high-conflict homes do children benefit from divorce and the subsequent decrease in conflict. The majority of divorces come out of lower-conflict

homes, and children from those homes are more negatively impacted by the stress of the divorce than the stress of unhappiness in the marriage (Amato 2000). Studies also suggest that stress levels for children are not improved when a child acquires a stepfamily through marriage. Although there may be increased economic stability, stepfamilies typically have a high level of interpersonal conflict (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994).

Children’s ability to deal with a divorce may depend on their age. Research has found that divorce may be most difficult for school-aged children, as they are old enough to understand the separation but not old enough to understand the reasoning behind it. Older teenagers are more likely to recognize the conflict that led to the divorce but may still feel fear, loneliness, guilt, and pressure to choose sides. Infants and preschool-age children may suffer the heaviest impact from the loss of routine that the marriage offered (Temke 2006).

Proximity to parents also makes a difference in a child’s well-being after divorce. Boys who live or have joint arrangements with their fathers show less aggression than those who are raised by their mothers only. Similarly, girls who live or have joint arrangements with their mothers tend to be more responsible and mature than those who are raised by their fathers only. Nearly three-fourths of the children of parents who are divorced live in a household headed by their mother, leaving many boys without a father figure residing in the home (U.S. Census Bureau 2011b). Still, researchers suggest that a strong parent-child relationship can greatly improve a child’s adjustment to divorce (Temke 2006).

There is empirical evidence that divorce has not discouraged children in terms of how they view marriage and family. A blended family has additional stress resulting from yours/mine/ours children. The blended family also has a ex-parent that has different discipline techniques. In a survey conducted by researchers from the University of Michigan, about three-quarters of high school seniors said it was “extremely important” to have a strong marriage and family life. And over half believed it was “very likely” that they would be in a lifelong marriage (Popenoe and Whitehead 2007). These numbers have continued to climb over the last twenty-five years.

Violence and Abuse

Violence and abuse are among the most disconcerting of the challenges that today's families face. Abuse can occur between spouses, between parent and child, as well as between other family members. The frequency of violence among families is a difficult to determine because many cases of spousal abuse and child abuse go unreported. In any case, studies have shown that abuse (reported or not) has a major impact on families and society as a whole.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a significant social problem in the United States. It is often characterized as violence between household or family members, specifically spouses. To include unmarried, cohabitating, and same-sex couples, family sociologists have created the term **intimate partner violence (IPV)**. Women are the primary victims of intimate partner violence. It is estimated that one in four women has experienced some form of IPV in her lifetime (compared to one in seven men) (Catalano 2007). IPV may include physical violence, such as punching, kicking, or other methods of inflicting physical pain; sexual violence, such as rape or other forced sexual acts; threats and intimidation that imply either physical or sexual abuse; and emotional abuse, such as harming another's sense of self-worth through words or controlling another's behavior. IPV often starts as emotional abuse and then escalates to other forms or combinations of abuse (Centers for Disease Control 2012).

Thirty percent of women who are murdered are killed by their intimate partner. What does this statistic reveal about societal patterns and norms concerning intimate relationships and gender roles? (Photo courtesy of Kathy Kimpel/flickr)

In 2010, of IPV acts that involved physical actions against women, 57% involved physical violence only; 9% involved rape and physical violence; 14% involved physical violence and stalking; 12% involved rape, physical violence, and stalking; and 4% involved rape only (CDC 2011). This is vastly different than IPV abuse patterns for men, which show that nearly all (92%) physical acts of IVP take the form of physical violence and fewer than 1% involve rape alone or in combination (Catalano 2007). IPV affects women at greater rates than men because women often take the passive role in relationships and may become emotionally dependent on their partners. Perpetrators of IPV work to establish and maintain such dependence in order to hold power and control over their victims, making them feel stupid, crazy, or ugly—in some way worthless.

IPV affects different segments of the population at different rates. The rate of IPV for black women (4.6 per 1,000 persons over the age of twelve) is

higher than that for white women (3.1). These numbers have been fairly stable for both racial groups over the last ten years. However, the numbers have steadily increased for Native Americans and Alaskan Natives (up to 11.1 for females) (Catalano 2007).

Those who are separated report higher rates of abuse than those with other marital statuses, as conflict is typically higher in those relationships. Similarly, those who are cohabitating are more likely than those who are married to experience IPV (Stets and Straus 1990). Other researchers have found that the rate of IPV doubles for women in low-income disadvantaged areas when compared to IPV experienced by women who reside in more affluent areas (Benson and Fox 2004). Overall, women ages twenty to twenty-four are at the greatest risk of nonfatal abuse (Catalano 2007).

Accurate statistics on IPV are difficult to determine, as it is estimated that more than half of nonfatal IPV goes unreported. It is not until victims choose to report crimes that patterns of abuse are exposed. Most victims studied stated that abuse had occurred for at least two years prior to their first report (Carlson, Harris, and Holden 1999).

Sometimes abuse is reported to police by a third party, but it still may not be confirmed by victims. A study of domestic violence incident reports found that even when confronted by police about abuse, 29% of victims denied that abuse occurred. Surprisingly, 19% of their assailants were likely to admit to abuse (Felson, Ackerman, and Gallagher 2005). According to the National Criminal Victims Survey, victims cite varied reason why they are reluctant to report abuse, as shown in the table below.

Reason Abuse Is Unreported	% Females	% Males
Considered a Private Matter	22	39

Reason Abuse Is Unreported	% Females	% Males
Fear of Retaliation	12	5
To Protect the Abuser	14	16
Belief That Police Won't Do Anything	8	8

This chart shows reasons that victims give for why they fail to report abuse to police authorities (Catalano 2007).

Two-thirds of nonfatal IPV occurs inside of the home and approximately 10 percent occurs at the home of the victim's friend or neighbor. The majority of abuse takes place between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m., and nearly half (42 percent) involves alcohol or drug use (Catalano 2007). Many perpetrators of IVP blame alcohol or drugs for their abuse, though studies have shown that alcohol and drugs do not cause IPV, they may only lower inhibitions (Hanson 2011). IPV has significant long-term effects on individual victims and on society. Studies have shown that IPV damage extends beyond the direct physical or emotional wounds. Extended IPV has been linked to unemployment among victims, as many have difficulty finding or holding employment. Additionally, nearly all women who report serious domestic problems exhibit symptoms of major depression (Goodwin, Chandler, and Meisel 2003).

Female victims of IPV are also more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs, suffer from eating disorders, and attempt suicide (Silverman et al. 2001). IPV is indeed something that impacts more than just intimate partners. In a survey, 34 percent of respondents said they have witnessed IPV, and 59 percent said that they know a victim personally (Roper Starch Worldwide 1995). Many people want to help IPV victims but are hesitant to intervene because they feel that it is a personal matter or they fear retaliation from the abuser—reasons similar to those of victims who do not report IPV.

Child Abuse

Children are among the most helpless victims of abuse. In 2010, there were more than 3.3 million reports of child abuse involving an estimated 5.9 million children (Child Help 2011). Three-fifths of child abuse reports are made by professionals, including teachers, law enforcement personal, and social services staff. The rest are made by anonymous sources, other relatives, parents, friends, and neighbors.

Child abuse may come in several forms, the most common being neglect (78.3 percent), followed by physical abuse (10.8 percent), sexual abuse (7.6 percent), psychological maltreatment (7.6 percent), and medical neglect (2.4 percent) (Child Help 2011). Some children suffer from a combination of these forms of abuse. The majority (81.2 percent) of perpetrators are parents; 6.2 percent are other relatives.

Infants (children less than one year old) were the most victimized population with an incident rate of 20.6 per 1,000 infants. This age group is particularly vulnerable to neglect because they are entirely dependent on parents for care. Some parents do not purposely neglect their children; factors such as cultural values, standard of care in a community, and poverty can lead to hazardous level of neglect. If information or assistance from public or private services are available and a parent fails to use those services, child welfare services may intervene (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

The Casey Anthony trial,
in which Casey was

ultimately acquitted of murder charges against her daughter, Caylee, created public outrage and brought to light issues of child abuse and neglect across the United States. (Photo courtesy of Bruce Tuten/flickr)

Infants are also often victims of physical abuse, particularly in the form of violent shaking. This type of physical abuse is referred to as **shaken-baby syndrome**, which describes a group of medical symptoms such as brain swelling and retinal hemorrhage resulting from forcefully shaking or causing impact to an infant’s head. A baby’s cry is the number one trigger for shaking. Parents may find themselves unable to soothe a baby’s concerns and may take their frustration out on the child by shaking him or her violently. Other stress factors such as a poor economy, unemployment, and general dissatisfaction with parental life may contribute this type of abuse. While there is no official central registry of shaken-baby syndrome statistics, it is estimated that each year 1,400 babies die or suffer serious injury from being shaken (Barr 2007).

Note:
Corporal Punishment
Physical abuse in children may come in the form of beating, kicking, throwing, choking, hitting with objects, burning, or other methods. Injury inflicted by such behavior is considered abuse even if the parent or caregiver did not intend to harm the child. Other types of physical contact that are characterized as discipline (spanking, for example) are not considered abuse as long as no injury results (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2008).

This issue is rather controversial among modern-day people in the United States. While some parents feel that physical discipline, or spanking, is an effective way to respond to bad behavior, others feel that it is a form of abuse. According to a series of surveys conducted between 2000 and 2016 (GSS 2016), as shown earlier, 74% of respondents approved spanking (n=24,311). There are many factors (variables) that can affect attitudes toward spanking, such as religion, race/ethnicity, gender, and so forth. To show the most calculable variable (social class), though, those who approved spanking included 70% of middle class people and 77% of lower class people.

Tendency toward physical punishment may be affected by education (a part of social class) and culture. Consistently to above, those who do not have a college education are more likely to spank their child (Crandall 2011). Currently, 23 states officially allow spanking in the school system; however, many parents may object and school officials must follow a set of clear guidelines when administering this type of punishment (Crandall 2011). Studies have shown that spanking is not an effective form of punishment and may lead to aggression (and/or depression in adult) by the victim, particularly in those who are spanked at a young age (Berlin 2009).

Child abuse occurs at all socioeconomic and education levels and crosses ethnic and cultural lines. Just as child abuse is often associated with stresses felt by parents, including financial stress, parents who demonstrate resilience to these stresses are less likely to abuse (Samuels 2011). Young parents are typically less capable of coping with stresses, particularly the stress of becoming a new parent. Teenage mothers are more likely to abuse their children than their older counterparts. As a parent's age increases, the risk of abuse decreases. Children born to mothers who are fifteen years old or younger are twice as likely to be abused or neglected by age five than are children born to mothers ages twenty to twenty-one (George and Lee 1997).

Drug and alcohol use is also a known contributor to child abuse. Children raised by substance abusers have a risk of physical abuse three times greater than other kids, and neglect is four times as prevalent in these families (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2011). Other risk factors include

social isolation, depression, low parental education, and a history of being mistreated as a child. Approximately 30 percent of abused children will later abuse their own children (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2006).

The long-term effects of child abuse impact the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of a child. Injury, poor health, and mental instability occur at a high rate in this group, with 80 percent meeting the criteria of one or more psychiatric disorders, such as depression, anxiety, or suicidal behavior, by age twenty-one. Abused children may also suffer from cognitive and social difficulties. Behavioral consequences will affect most, but not all, of child abuse victims. Children of abuse are 25 percent more likely, as adolescents, to suffer from difficulties like poor academic performance and teen pregnancy, or to engage in behaviors like drug abuse and general delinquency. They are also more likely to participate in risky sexual acts that increase their chances of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2006). Other risky behaviors include drug and alcohol abuse. As these consequences can affect the health care, education, and criminal systems, the problems resulting from child abuse do not just belong to the child and family, but to society as a whole.

Summary

Today’s families face a variety of challenges, specifically to marital stability. While divorce rates have decreased in the last twenty-five years, many family members, especially children, still experience the negative effects of divorce. Children are also negatively impacted by violence and abuse within the home, with nearly 6 million children abused each year.

Further Research

To find more information on child abuse, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services web site at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/child_welfare to review documents provided by the Child Welfare Information Gateway.

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Glossary

intimate partner violence (IPV)
: violence that occurs between individuals who maintain a romantic or sexual relationship

shaken-baby syndrome
: a group of medical symptoms such as brain swelling and retinal hemorrhage resulting from forcefully shaking or impacting an infant's head

Introduction to Religion
class="introduction"

Religions come in many forms, such as this large megachurch. (Photo courtesy of ToBeDaniel/Wikimedia Commons)

Why do sociologists study religion? For centuries, humankind has sought to understand and explain the “meaning of life.” Many philosophers believe this contemplation and the desire to understand our place in the universe are what differentiate humankind from other species. Religion, in one form or another, has been found in all human societies since human societies first appeared. Archaeological digs have revealed ritual objects, ceremonial burial sites, and other religious artifacts. Social conflict and even wars often result from religious disputes. To understand a culture, sociologists must study its religion.

What is religion? Pioneer sociologist Émile Durkheim described it with the ethereal statement that it consists of “things that surpass the limits of our knowledge” (1915). He went on to elaborate: Religion is “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called a church, all those who adhere to them” (1915). Some people associate religion with places of worship (a synagogue or church), others with a practice (confession or meditation), and still others with a concept that guides their daily lives (like dharma or sin). All these people can agree that **religion** is a system of beliefs, values, and practices concerning what a person holds sacred or considers to be spiritually significant.

Does religion bring fear, wonder, relief, explanation of the unknown or control over freedom and choice? How do our religious perspectives affect our behavior? These are questions sociologists ask and are reasons they study religion. What are peoples' conceptions of the profane and the sacred? How do religious ideas affect the real-world reactions and choices of people in a society?

Religion can also serve as a filter for examining other issues in society and other components of a culture. For example, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it became important for teachers, church leaders, and the media to educate Americans about Islam to prevent stereotyping and to promote religious tolerance. Sociological tools and methods, such as surveys, polls, interviews, and analysis of historical data, can be applied to the study of religion in a culture to help us better understand the role religion plays in people’s lives and the way it influences society.

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Glossary

religion

a system of beliefs, values, and practices concerning what a person holds to be sacred or spiritually significant

The Sociological Approach to Religion

- Discuss the historical view of religion from a sociological perspective
- Understand how the major sociological paradigms view religion

From the Latin *religio* (respect for what is sacred) and *religare* (to bind, in the sense of an obligation), the term religion describes various systems of belief and practice that define what people consider to be sacred or spiritual (Fasching and deChant 2001; Durkheim 1915). Throughout history, and in societies across the world, leaders have used religious narratives, symbols, and traditions in an attempt to give more meaning to life and understand the universe. Some form of religion is found in every known culture, and it is usually practiced in a public way by a group. The practice of religion can include feasts and festivals, intercession with God or gods, marriage and funeral services, music and art, meditation or initiation, sacrifice or service, and other aspects of culture.

While some people think of religion as something individual because religious beliefs can be highly personal, religion is also a social institution. Social scientists recognize that religion exists as an organized and integrated set of beliefs, behaviors, and norms centered on basic social needs and values. Moreover, religion is a cultural universal found in all social groups. For instance, in every culture, funeral rites are practiced in some way, although these customs vary between cultures and within religious affiliations. Despite differences, there are common elements in a ceremony marking a person's death, such as announcement of the death, care of the deceased, disposition, and ceremony or ritual. These universals, and the differences in the way societies and individuals experience religion, provide rich material for sociological study.

In studying religion, sociologists distinguish between what they term the experience, beliefs, and rituals of a religion. **Religious experience** refers to the conviction or sensation that we are connected to "the divine." This type of communion might be experienced when people are pray or meditate. **Religious beliefs** are specific ideas members of a particular faith hold to be true, such as that Jesus Christ was the son of God, or that reincarnation exists. Another illustration of religious beliefs is the creation stories we find in different religions. **Religious rituals** are behaviors or practices that are

either required or expected of the members of a particular group, such as bar mitzvah or confession of sins (Barkan and Greenwood 2003).

The History of Religion as a Sociological Concept

During the European industrialization and secularization, many theorists, who closely observed the process of modernization, attempted to examine the relationship between religion and society. Among others, this section introduces Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud.

It is very important to see that when social scientists study religion, they are not interested in judging if god exists or not, or which religion is the best ever. They are interested in, instead, analyzing how and why religion was initiated, how religion functions or dysfunctions, what religion means to us, and the like.

Émile Durkheim
As stated earlier, French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things" (1915). To him, **sacred** meant anything that is related to god, religion, religious dignity, religious identity, or spirituality--as opposed to profane, secular, or worldly, that is, anything pragmatic, instrumental, economic, political, vulgar, or bodily.

Ceremonial costumes of the Pueblo Indians (Roediger 1991, pp. 159-71)

Here is an example that shows the severity against the violation of the sacred. When invaded by the Spaniards in the late 17th century, the Pueblos (Native Americans in New Mexico and Arizona) accepted political domination of these invaders. However, when the Spaniards burned the Pueblos' masks, a sacred symbol of their religion, the revolt fiercely broke out, and more than 1,000 Spaniards were killed, and all others were driven out of the Pueblo country (see Spicer 1969, pp. 41-42).

Durkheim suggested that "god is nothing more than society apotheosized" (1947 [1915], p. 236). By this, he meant that god is the society itself worshiped in the form of god. That is, the source of religion is the collective mind-set of society. To him, religion is about community: It binds people together (social solidarity), maintains values and norms (social control), and teaches us why we are here and how we should live (meaning and purpose of life).

Max Weber

Max Weber (1864–1920) believed religion was a precipitator of social change. He examined the effects of religion on economic activities and

noticed that heavily Protestant societies—such as those in the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and Germany—were the most highly developed capitalist societies and that their most successful business leaders were Protestant. In his writing *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), as mentioned earlier, he suggested that the Protestant work ethic influenced the development of capitalism (see Ch. 1).

Basically, the Christian doctrine admonishes greediness for wealth, as seen in the saying: It is easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter God's Kingdom. Weber noted, however, that certain kinds of Protestantism (i.e., Calvinism) supported the pursuit of material gain by motivating believers to work hard, be successful, and save money. (The modern use of "work ethic" comes directly from Weber's Protestant ethic, although it has now lost its religious connotations.)

Karl Marx

Karl Marx (1818–1883) studied the social impact of religion. Unlike Weber, however, he critically observed that religion helps maintain inequality and perpetuates the status quo--or the unchanging stratified structure. Religion, indeed, supported socially structured exploitation of the weaker in the name of God, e.g., colonialism, slavery, kingship, and so forth.

Marx famously argued that "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world... It is the opium of the people" (1844). By this, he meant that religion works as if it were drug. That is, as long as you worship religion (or use drug), you may forget about your suffering in the reality. But as long as you forget about the reality, the reality would never change. His massage is this. Instead of dreaming of the so-called eternal happiness after life, pursue it in this world, together with all other people. Say "No" to religion, face the reality, and "Get up, stand up, stand up for your rights. Don't give up the fight!"

Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud studied totemism practiced among the Australian aborigines, and reported several important findings in his *Totem and Taboo* (1989 [1919]). According to him, first of all, a totem is a class of material objects which a savage regards with superstitious respect, believing that there exists between him and every member of the class an intimate and

special relation. The members of the clan expects protection and care from their totem. This is similar to Durkheim's "society apotheosized" (see above).

Second, a totem is, as a rule, an animal, which stands in a peculiar relation to the whole clan. But in Freud's analysis, the totem animal is in reality a substitute for the father, a symbol that stands for protection. Finally, connecting this to the source of religion, he suggested that for neither fear nor demons can be accepted in psychology as finalities, gods are the product of the psychic powers of man. That is, man created gods, as a substitute for the father who is protective of the fear for the death, for nature, and for the unknown path to civilization.

A Summary

For Durkheim, Weber, Marx, and Freud, religion was a "must" for analysis. For Durkheim, religion was a force for cohesion that helped bind the members of society to the group. Weber believed the particular religion could be understood as the leading energy to capitalism. Marx considered religion inseparable from the economy and the worker. Religion could not be understood apart from the capitalist society that perpetuated inequality. Freud explained religion as the father protective to the fear. Despite their different views, these social theorists all believed in the centrality of religion to society.

Theoretical Perspectives on Religion

Functionalists believe religion meets many important needs for people, including group cohesion and companionship. (Photo courtesy of James Emery/flickr)

Modern-day sociologists often apply one of three major theoretical perspectives. These views offer different lenses through which to study and understand society: functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory. Let’s explore how scholars applying these paradigms understand religion.

Functionalism

Functionalists contend that religion serves several functions in society. Religion, in fact, depends on society for its existence, value, and

significance, and vice versa. From this perspective, religion serves several purposes, like providing answers to spiritual mysteries, offering emotional comfort, and creating a place for social interaction and social control.

In providing answers, religion defines the spiritual world and spiritual forces, including divine beings. For example, it helps answer questions like, “How was the world created?” “Why do we suffer?” “Is there a plan for our lives?” and “Is there an afterlife?” As another function, religion provides emotional comfort in times of crisis. Religious rituals bring order, comfort, and organization through shared familiar symbols and patterns of behavior.

One of the most important functions of religion, from a functionalist perspective, is the opportunities it creates for social interaction and the formation of groups. It provides social support and social networking and offers a place to meet others who hold similar values and a place to seek help (spiritual and material) in times of need.

Moreover, it can foster group cohesion and integration. Finally, religion promotes social control: It reinforces social norms such as appropriate styles of dress, following the law, and regulating sexual behavior.

On the other hand, though, dysfunctional aspects of religion must be also discussed. Because religion can be central to many people’s concept of themselves, for example, there emerges an “in-group” against “out-group” emotions, quite illogical and possibly dangerous, though. On an extreme level, the Inquisition, the Salem witch trials, anti-Semitism, to name but a few of dysfunctional aspects. Similarly, many wars in human history resulted from religious conflicts.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists view religion as an institution that helps maintain patterns of social inequality. For example, the Vatican has a tremendous amount of wealth, while the average income of Catholic parishioners is small. According to this perspective, religion has been used to support the “divine

right” of oppressive monarchs and to justify unequal social structures, like India’s caste system.

Conflict theorists are critical of the way many religions promote the idea that believers should be satisfied with existing circumstances because they are divinely ordained. This power dynamic has been used by Christian institutions for centuries to keep poor people poor and to teach them that they shouldn’t be concerned with what they lack because their “true” reward (from a religious perspective) will come after death. Conflict theorists also point out that those in power in a religion are often able to dictate practices, rituals, and beliefs through their interpretation of religious texts or via proclaimed direct communication from the divine.

Many religions, including the Catholic faith, have long prohibited women from becoming spiritual leaders. Feminist theorists focus on gender inequality and promote leadership roles for women in religion. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

The feminist perspective is a conflict theory view that focuses specifically on gender inequality. In terms of religion, feminist theorists assert that, although women are typically the ones to socialize children into a religion, they have traditionally held very few positions of power within religions. A few religions and religious denominations are more gender equal, but male dominance remains the norm of most.

Note:
Rational Choice Theory: Can Economic Theory Be Applied to Religion?
How do people decide which religion to follow, if any? How does one pick a church or decide which denomination "fits" best? Rational choice theory (RCT) is one way social scientists have attempted to explain these behaviors. The theory proposes that people are self-interested, though not necessarily selfish, and that people make rational choices—choices that can reasonably be expected to maximize positive outcomes while minimizing negative outcomes. Sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark (1988) first considered the use of RCT to explain some aspects of religious behavior, with the assumption that there is a basic human need for religion in terms of providing belief in a supernatural being, a sense of meaning in life, and belief in life after death. Religious explanations of these concepts are presumed to be more satisfactory than scientific explanations, which may help to account for the continuation of strong religious connectedness in countries such as the United States, despite predictions of some competing theories for a great decline in religious affiliation due to modernization and religious pluralism.
Another assumption of RCT is that religious organizations can be viewed in terms of "costs" and "rewards." Costs are not only monetary requirements, but are also the time, effort, and commitment demands of any particular religious organization. Rewards are the intangible benefits in terms of belief and satisfactory explanations about life, death, and the supernatural, as well as social rewards from membership. RCT proposes that, in a pluralistic society with many religious options, religious organizations will compete for members, and people will choose between different churches or denominations in much the same way they select other consumer goods, balancing costs and rewards in a rational manner. In

this framework, RCT also explains the development and decline of churches, denominations, sects, and even cults; this limited part of the very complex RCT theory is the only aspect well supported by research data. Critics of RCT argue that it doesn’t fit well with human spiritual needs, and many sociologists disagree that the costs and rewards of religion can even be meaningfully measured or that individuals use a rational balancing process regarding religious affiliation. The theory doesn’t address many aspects of religion that individuals may consider essential (such as faith) and further fails to account for agnostics and atheists who don’t seem to have a similar need for religious explanations. Critics also believe this theory overuses economic terminology and structure and point out that terms such as “rational” and “reward” are unacceptably defined by their use; they would argue that the theory is based on faulty logic and lacks external, empirical support. A scientific explanation for *why* something occurs can’t reasonably be supported by the fact that it *does* occur. RCT is widely used in economics and to a lesser extent in criminal justice, but the application of RCT in explaining the religious beliefs and behaviors of people and societies is still being debated in sociology today.

Symbolic Interactionism

Rising from the concept that our world is socially constructed, symbolic interactionism studies the symbols and interactions of everyday life. To interactionists, beliefs and experiences are not sacred unless individuals in a society regard them as sacred. The Star of David in Judaism, the cross in Christianity, and the crescent and star in Islam are examples of sacred symbols. Interactionists are interested in what these symbols communicate. Because interactionists study one-on-one, everyday interactions between individuals, a scholar using this approach might ask questions focused on this dynamic. The interaction between religious leaders and practitioners, the role of religion in the ordinary components of everyday life, and the ways people express religious values in social interactions—all might be topics of study to an interactionist.

Summary

Religion describes the beliefs, values, and practices related to sacred or spiritual concerns. Social theorist Émile Durkheim defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things" (1915). Max Weber believed religion could be a force for social change. Karl Marx viewed religion as a tool used by capitalist societies to perpetuate inequality. Religion is a social institution, because it includes beliefs and practices that serve the needs of society. Religion is also an example of a cultural universal, because it is found in all societies in one form or another. Functionalism, conflict theory, and interactionism all provide valuable ways for sociologists to understand religion.

Further Research

For more discussion on the study of sociology and religion, check out the following blog: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/immanent_frame/. The Immanent Frame is a forum for the exchange of ideas about religion, secularism, and society by leading thinkers in the social sciences and humanities.

Read more about functionalist views on religion at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Grinnell_functionalism, symbolic interactionist view on religion at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/flat_Earth, and women in the clergy at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/women_clergy.

Some would argue that the Protestant work ethic is still alive and well in the United States. Read British historian Niall Ferguson's view at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Protestant_work_ethic.

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Glossary

religious experience
: the conviction or sensation that one is connected to “the divine”

religious beliefs
: specific ideas that members of a particular faith hold to be true

religious rituals
: behaviors or practices that are either required for or expected of the members of a particular group

World Religions

- Explain the differences between various types of religious organizations
- Understand classifications of religion, like animism, polytheism, monotheism, and atheism
- Describe several major world religions

The symbols of fourteen religions are depicted here. In no particular order, they represent Judaism, Wicca, Taoism, Christianity, Confucianism, Baha'i, Druidism, Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Shinto, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Can you match the symbol to the religion? What might a symbolic interactionist make of these symbols? (Photo courtesy of

ReligiousTolerance.org
)

The major religions of the world (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, Taoism, and Judaism) differ in many respects, including how each religion is organized and the belief system each upholds. Other differences include the nature of belief in a higher power, the history of how the world and the religion began, and the use of sacred texts and objects.

Types of Religious Organizations

Religions organize themselves—their institutions, practitioners, and structures—in a variety of fashions. For instance, when the Roman Catholic Church emerged, it borrowed many of its organizational principles from the ancient Roman military and turned senators into cardinals, for example. Sociologists use different terms, like ecclesia, denomination, and sect, to define these types of organizations. Scholars are also aware that these definitions are not static. Most religions transition through different organizational phases. For example, Christianity began as a cult, transformed into a sect, and today exists as an ecclesia.

Cults, like sects, are new religious groups. In the United States today this term often carries pejorative connotations. However, almost all religions began as cults and gradually progressed to levels of greater size and organization. The term cult is sometimes used interchangeably with the term new religious movement (NRM). In its pejorative use, these groups are often disparaged as being secretive, highly controlling of members' lives, and dominated by a single, charismatic leader.

Controversy exists over whether some groups are cults, perhaps due in part to media sensationalism over groups like polygamous Mormons or the Peoples Temple followers who died at Jonestown, Guyana. Some groups that are controversially labeled as cults today include the Church of Scientology and the Hare Krishna movement.

A **sect** is a small and relatively new group. Most of the well-known Christian denominations in the United States today began as sects. For example, the Methodists and Baptists protested against their parent Anglican Church in England, just as Henry VIII protested against the Catholic Church by forming the Anglican Church. From “protest” comes the term Protestant.

Occasionally, a sect is a breakaway group that may be in tension with larger society. They sometimes claim to be returning to “the fundamentals” or to contest the veracity of a particular doctrine. When membership in a sect increases over time, it may grow into a denomination. Often a sect begins as an offshoot of a denomination, when a group of members believes they should separate from the larger group.

Some sects do not grow into denominations. Sociologists call these **established sects**. Established sects, such as the Amish or Jehovah’s Witnesses fall halfway between sect and denomination on the ecclesia–cult continuum because they have a mixture of sect-like and denomination-like characteristics.

A **denomination** is a large, mainstream religious organization, but it does not claim to be official or state sponsored. It is one religion among many. For example, Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal, Catholic, and Seventh-day Adventist are all Christian denominations.

The term **ecclesia**, originally referring to a political assembly of citizens in ancient Athens, Greece, now refers to a congregation. In sociology, the term is used to refer to a religious group that most all members of a society belong to. It is considered a nationally recognized, or official, religion that holds a religious monopoly and is closely allied with state and secular powers. The United States does not have an ecclesia by this standard; in fact, this is the type of religious organization that many of the first colonists came to America to escape.

One way to remember these religious organizational terms is to think of cults, sects, denominations, and ecclesia representing a continuum, with increasing influence on society, where cults are least influential and ecclesia are most influential.

Totem pole: The connection between human and nature--and between the past (ancestors), the present (ourselves), and the future (descendants) (Photo courtesy of tes.com).

Types of Religions

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have strived to classify religions. One widely accepted categorization that helps people understand different belief systems considers what or who people worship (if anything). Using this method of classification, religions might fall into one of these basic categories.

Classification	What/Who Is Divine	Example
Animism	Nonhuman beings (animals, plants, natural world)	Indigenous nature worship
Totemism	Human-nature connection; ancestor worship	Ojibwa (Native American) beliefs
Polytheism	Multiple gods and goddesses	The ancient Greeks and Romans
Monotheism	Single god	Judaism, Christianity, Islam

Classification of religions by what or who they hold to be divine.

Religions vary in several ways, such as the number god(s) worshiped, the basic attitude toward the reality including humans, nature, the universe, and so forth.

- **Animism**, the most primitive, archetypical religious form, believes that everything has its own god, such as the god of the sky, of the ocean, of the mountain, and even, of the toilet (not a joke).
- **Totemism**, practiced among Native Americans and Aboriginal Australians, worships a divine connection between humans and other natural beings, as well as between the past (ancestors), the present (ourselves), and the future (descendants).
- **Polytheism**, seen in ancient Greece and Rome, worships multiple gods and goddesses.
- **Monotheism**, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, worships one single god. The followers of these religions believe that monotheism is the most evolved religious style. (Ethnocentric? Maybe.)

People who believe in God are called **theists**. There are some, if not many, who do not believe in God, called **atheists**. The word "atheist" has two parts, "a" that means non and "theist," the believer of god. It means a person believing in no god.

There are two types among atheists. Some of them insist that they are sure there's no God, while others are unsure about it. Theists (those who believe in God) can be also grouped into these two types, i.e., being sure about their belief and being unsure about it. The former (being sure) are called **gnostics** (or "knowable") and the latter (being unsure), **agnostics** ("unknowable").

	Theist	**Atheist**
Gnostic	God exists, and nothing is surer than this.	There is no God, and nothing is surer than this.
Agnostic	I think God exists, although we cannot be sure about this.	I don’t think God exists, although we cannot be sure about this.

A Typology of Religious Beliefs by Theism/Atheism and Gnosticism/Agnosticism (based on Smith [1979])

The combination of the two variables, "theist/atheist" and "gnostic/agnostic," yields 4 types of religious attitudes, as shown above. A well-known atheist and gnostic is John Lennon of the Beatles, who sang a song titled "Imagine" that goes like:

- Imagine there's no heaven
- It's easy if you try
- No hell below us
- Above us only sky
- Imagine all the people

- Living for today...

Are you familiar with this song? If not, you should listen to it on YouTube or something. It's worthy. Its main message is world peace.

A well-known theist and agnostic is a genius physicist, Albert Einstein. He suggested, "I cannot prove to you there is no personal God, but if I were to speak of him, I would be a liar" (Miller 1955). By "personal God," Einstein meant the God who rewards us for our good behaviors and punishes us for our bad behaviors. He implied many times, though, that it is the God that created the universe. But the God didn't place humans at the center of the universe; we humans are merely a tiny piece of God's creation, simply following God's rules just like all other pieces.

Secularization

Historical social scientists Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud all predicted that the modernization of society would bring about the decline of religious influences combined with the increase of scientific influences, a modern social phenomenon called **secularization**. The tendency is this. The more modern the society (or a person) is, the more secular it (he/she) tends to be. When people get seriously ill, for example, most of them in our society today want to get help from a medical doctor rather than a shaman or a clergyman. (If qualified medical care is affordable to most of us is quite another story, which will be discussed in Ch. 20, Health and Medicine.)

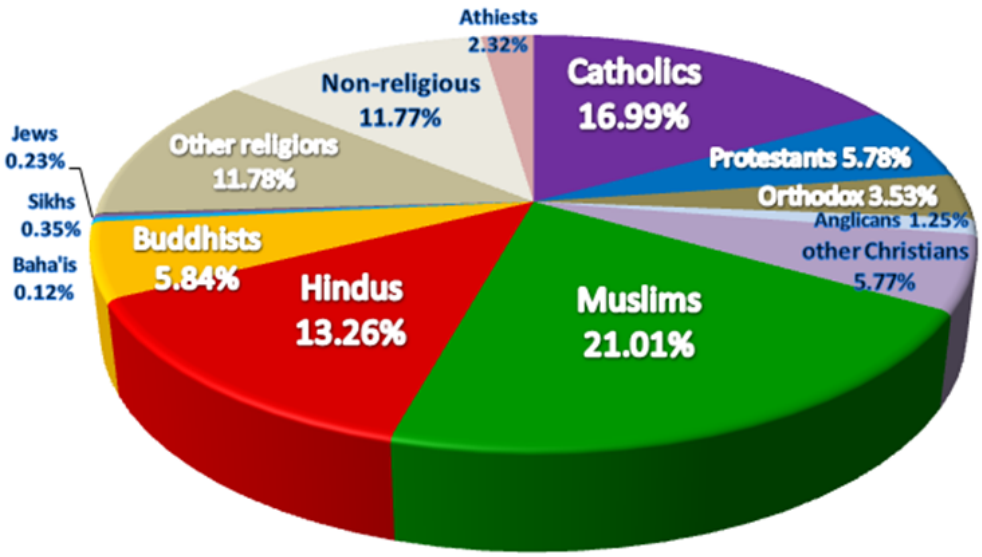
Secularization is not a phenomenon uniformly happening to all. Some are faster while others tend to lag behind. Among those who lag behind, some are even proud of it. One-time presidential contender Michele Bachmann, for example, even connected Hurricane Irene and the 2011 earthquake felt along much of the East Coast to politicians’ failure to listen to God (Ward 2011).

While some scholars see the United States becoming increasingly secular, others observe a rise in fundamentalism. Compared to other democratic,

industrialized countries, the U.S. is generally perceived to be a fairly religious nation. In the U.S., 65% of adults in a 2009 Gallup survey said religion was an important part of their daily lives, compared to Spain (49%), Canada (42%), France (30%), the United Kingdom (27%), and Sweden (17%) (Crabtree and Pelham 2009). Again, the more modern the society (a person) is, the more secular it (he/she) tends to be.

The World's Religions

The World's Religions, 2007



Courtesy of TheGreenEditor (statistics from CIA World Factbook).

Religions have emerged and developed across the world. Some have been short-lived, while others have persisted and grown. In this section, we will explore seven of the world's major religions.

Hinduism

The oldest religion in the world, Hinduism originated in the Indus River Valley about 4,500 years ago in what is now modern-day northwest India and Pakistan. It arose contemporaneously with ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures. With roughly one billion followers, Hinduism is the third-largest of the world's religions. Hindus believe in a divine power

that can manifest as different entities. Three main incarnations—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—are sometimes compared to the manifestations of the divine in the Christian Trinity.

Multiple sacred texts, collectively called the Vedas, contain hymns and rituals from ancient India and are mostly written in Sanskrit. Hindus generally believe in a set of principles called dharma, which refer to one's duty in the world that corresponds with "right" actions. Hindus also believe in karma, or the notion that spiritual ramifications of one's actions are balanced cyclically in this life or a future life (reincarnation).

Hindu women sometimes apply decorations of henna dye to their hands for special occasions such as weddings and religious festivals. (Photo courtesy of Akash Mazumdar)

Buddhism promotes peace and tolerance. The 14th Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) is one of the most revered and influential Tibetan Buddhist leaders. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Pelosi/flickr)

Buddhism

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama around 500 B.C.E. Siddhartha was said to have given up a comfortable, upper-class life to follow one of poverty and spiritual devotion. At the age of thirty-five, he famously meditated under a sacred fig tree and vowed not to rise before he achieved enlightenment (*bodhi*). After this experience, he became known as Buddha, or “enlightened one.” Followers were drawn to Buddha’s teachings and the practice of meditation, and he later established a monastic order.

Meditation is an important practice in Buddhism. A Tibetan monk is shown here engaged in solitary meditation. (Photo courtesy of Prince Roy/flickr)

Buddha’s teachings encourage Buddhists to lead a moral life by accepting the four Noble Truths: 1) life is suffering, 2) suffering arises from attachment to desires, 3) suffering ceases when attachment to desires ceases, and 4) freedom from suffering is possible by following the “middle way.” The concept of the “middle way” is central to Buddhist thinking, which encourages people to live in the present and to practice acceptance of others (Smith 1991). Buddhism also tends to deemphasize the role of a godhead, instead stressing the importance of personal responsibility (Craig 2002).

Confucianism

Confucianism was the official religion of China from 200 B.C.E. until it was officially abolished when communist leadership discouraged religious practice in 1949. The religion was developed by Kung Fu-Tzu (Confucius), who lived in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. An extraordinary teacher, his lessons—which were about self-discipline, respect for authority and tradition, and *jen* (the kind treatment of every person)—were collected in a book called the *Analects*.

Some religious scholars consider Confucianism more of a social system than a religion because it focuses on sharing wisdom about moral practices but doesn't involve any type of specific worship; nor does it have formal objects. In fact, its teachings were developed in context of problems of social anarchy and a near-complete deterioration of social cohesion. Dissatisfied with the social solutions put forth, Kung Fu-Tzu developed his own model of religious morality to help guide society (Smith 1991).

Taoism

In Taoism, the purpose of life is inner peace and harmony. Tao is usually translated as "way" or "path." The founder of the religion is generally recognized to be a man named Laozi, who lived sometime in the sixth century B.C.E. in China. Taoist beliefs emphasize the virtues of compassion and moderation.

The central concept of *tao* can be understood to describe a spiritual reality, the order of the universe, or the way of modern life in harmony with the former two. The ying-yang symbol and the concept of polar forces are central Taoist ideas (Smith 1991). Some scholars have compared this Chinese tradition to its Confucian counterpart by saying that "whereas Confucianism is concerned with day-to-day rules of conduct, Taoism is concerned with a more spiritual level of being" (Feng and English 1972).

Judaism

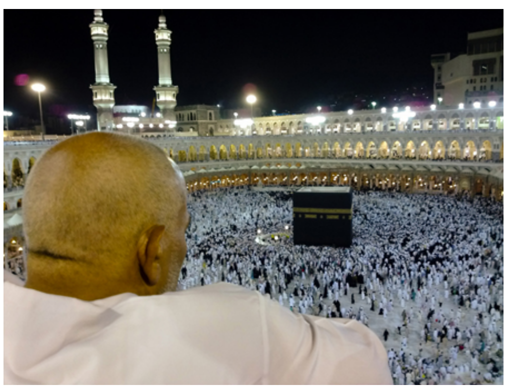
After their Exodus from Egypt in the thirteenth century B.C.E., Jews, a nomadic society, became monotheistic, worshipping only one God. The Jews' covenant, or promise of a special relationship with Yahweh (God), is an important element of Judaism, and their sacred text is the Torah, which Christians also follow as the first five books of the Bible. Talmud refers to a collection of sacred Jewish oral interpretation of the Torah. Jews emphasize moral behavior and action in this world as opposed to beliefs or personal salvation in the next world.

The Islamic house of worship is called a mosque. (Photo courtesy of David Stanley/flickr)

Islam

Islam is monotheistic religion and it follows the teaching of the prophet Muhammad, born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in 570 C.E. Muhammad is seen only as a prophet, not as a divine being, and he is believed to be the messenger of Allah (God), who is divine. The followers of Islam, whose U.S. population is projected to double in the next twenty years (Pew Research Forum 2011), are called Muslims.

Islam means “peace” and “submission.” The sacred text for Muslims is the Qur’an (or Koran). As with Christianity’s Old Testament, many of the Qur’an stories are shared with the Jewish faith. Divisions exist within Islam, but all Muslims are guided by five beliefs or practices, often called “pillars”: 1) Allah is the only god, and Muhammad is his prophet, 2) daily prayer, 3) helping those in poverty, 4) fasting as a spiritual practice, and 5) pilgrimage to the holy center of Mecca.



cornerstones of Muslim practice is journeying to the religion’s most sacred place, Mecca. (Photo courtesy of Raeky/flickr)

Christianity

Today the largest religion in the world, Christianity began 2,000 years ago in Palestine, with Jesus of Nazareth, a charismatic leader who taught his followers about *caritas* (charity) or treating others as you would like to be treated yourself.

The sacred text for Christians is the Bible. While Jews, Christians, and Muslims share many of same historical religious stories, their beliefs verge. In their shared sacred stories, it is suggested that the son of God—a messiah—will return to save God's followers. While Christians believe that he already appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, Jews and Muslims disagree. While they recognize Christ as an important historical figure, their traditions don't believe he's the son of God, and their faiths see the prophecy of the messiah's arrival as not yet fulfilled.

Different Christian groups have variations among their sacred texts. For instance, Mormons, an established Christian sect, also use the Book of Mormon, which they believe details other parts of Christian doctrine and Jesus' life that aren't included in the Bible. Similarly, the Catholic Bible includes the Apocrypha, a collection that, while part of the 1611 King James translation, is no longer included in Protestant versions of the Bible. Although monotheistic, Christians often describe their god through three manifestations that they call the Holy Trinity: the father (God), the son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a term Christians often use to describe religious experience, or how they feel the presence of the sacred in their lives. One foundation of Christian doctrine is the Ten Commandments, which decry acts considered sinful, including theft, murder, and adultery.

Summary

Sociological terms for different kinds of religious organizations are, in order of decreasing influence in society, ecclesia, denomination, sect, and cult. Religions can be categorized according to what or whom its followers worship. Some of the major, and oldest, of the world's religions include Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

Further Research

PBS's *Frontline* explores "the life of Jesus and the rise of Christianity" in this in-depth documentary. View the piece in its entirety here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/PBS_Frontline.

For more insight on Confucianism, read the Analects by Confucius, at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Confucius_Analects. For a primer on Judaism, read Judaism 101 at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Jew_FAQ.

Sorting through the different Christian denominations can be a daunting task. To help clarify these groups, go to http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Christian_denominations.

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Glossary

animism

the religion that believes in the divinity of nonhuman beings, like animals, plants, and objects of the natural world

atheism
: the belief in no deities

cults
: religious groups that are small, secretive, and highly controlling of members and have a charismatic leader

denomination
: a large, mainstream religion that is not sponsored by the state

ecclesia
: a religion that is considered the state religion

established sects
: sects that last but do not become denominations

monotheism
: a religion based on belief in a single deity

polytheism
: a religion based on belief in multiple deities

sect
: a small, new offshoot of a denomination

totemism
: the belief in a divine connection between humans and other natural beings

Religion in the United States

- Give examples of religion as an agent of social change
- Describe current U.S. trends including megachurches and secularization

In examining the state of religion in the United States today, we see the complexity of religious life in our society, plus emerging trends like the rise of the megachurch, secularization, and the role of religion in social change.

Religion and Social Change

Religion has historically been an impetus to social change. The translation of sacred texts into everyday, nonscholarly language empowered people to shape their religions. Disagreements between religious groups and instances of religious persecution have led to wars and genocides. The United States is no stranger to religion as an agent of social change. In fact, the United States' first European arrivals were acting largely on religious convictions when they were compelled to settle in the United States.

Liberation Theology

Liberation theology began as a movement within the Roman Catholic Church in the 1950s and 1960s in Latin America, and it combines Christian principles with political activism. It uses the church to promote social change via the political arena, and it is most often seen in attempts to reduce or eliminate social injustice, discrimination, and poverty. A list of proponents of this kind of social justice (although some pre-date liberation theory) could include Francis of Assisi, Leo Tolstoy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Desmond Tutu.

Although begun as a moral reaction against the poverty caused by social injustice in that part of the world, today liberation theology is an international movement that encompasses many churches and denominations. Liberation theologians discuss theology from the point of view of the poor and the oppressed, and some interpret the scriptures as a call to action against poverty and injustice. In Europe and North America,

feminist theology has emerged from liberation theology as a movement to bring social justice to women.

Note:

Religious Leaders and the Rainbow of Gay Pride

What happens when a religious leader officiates a gay marriage against denomination policies? What about when that same minister defends the action in part by coming out and making her own lesbian relationship known to the church?

In the case of the Reverend Amy DeLong, it meant a church trial. Some leaders in her denomination assert that homosexuality is incompatible with their faith, while others feel this type of discrimination has no place in a modern church (Barrick 2011).

As the LGBT community increasingly advocates for, and earns, basic civil rights, how will religious communities respond? Many religious groups have traditionally discounted LGBT sexualities as “wrong.” However, these organizations have moved closer to respecting human rights by, for example, increasingly recognizing females as an equal gender. The Roman Catholic Church drew controversial attention to this issue in 2010 when the Vatican secretary of state suggested homosexuality was in part to blame for pedophilic sexual abuse scandals that have plagued the church (Beck 2010). Because numerous studies have shown there to be no relationship between homosexuality and pedophilia, nor a higher incidence of pedophilia among homosexuals than among heterosexuals (Beck 2010), the Vatican’s comments seem suspect. More recently Pope Francis has been pushing for a more open church, and some Catholic bishops have been advocating for a more "gay-friendly" church (McKenna, 2014). This has not come to pass, but some scholars believe these changes are a matter of time.

No matter the situation, most religions have a tenuous (at best) relationship with practitioners and leaders in the gay community. As one of the earliest Christian denominations to break barriers by ordaining women to serve as pastors, will Amy DeLong’s United Methodist denomination also be a leader in LBGT rights within Christian churchgoing society?

Megachurches

A **megachurch** is a Christian church that has a very large congregation averaging more than 2,000 people who attend regular weekly services. As of 2009, the largest megachurch in the United States was in Houston Texas, boasting an average weekly attendance of more than 43,000 (Bogan 2009). Megachurches exist in other parts of the world, especially in South Korea, Brazil, and several African countries, but the rise of the megachurch in the United States is a fairly recent phenomenon that has developed primarily in California, Florida, Georgia, and Texas.

Since 1970 the number of megachurches in this country has grown from about fifty to more than 1,000, most of which are attached to the Southern Baptist denomination (Bogan 2009). Approximately six million people are members of these churches (Bird and Thumma 2011). The architecture of these church buildings often resembles a sport or concert arena. The church may include jumbotrons (large-screen televisual technology usually used in sports arenas to show close-up shots of an event). Worship services feature contemporary music with drums and electric guitars and use state-of-the-art sound equipment. The buildings sometimes include food courts, sports and recreation facilities, and bookstores. Services such as child care and mental health counseling are often offered.

Typically, a single, highly charismatic pastor leads the megachurch; at present, most are male. Some megachurches and their preachers have a huge television presence, and viewers all around the country watch and respond to their shows and fundraising.

Besides size, U.S. megachurches share other traits, including conservative theology, evangelism, use of technology and social networking (Facebook, Twitter, podcasts, blogs), hugely charismatic leaders, few financial struggles, multiple sites, and predominantly white membership. They list their main focuses as youth activities, community service, and study of the Scripture (Hartford Institute for Religion Research b).

Critics of megachurches believe they are too large to promote close relationships among fellow church members or the pastor, as could occur in smaller houses of worship. Supporters note that, in addition to the large

worship services, congregations generally meet in small groups, and some megachurches have informal events throughout the week to allow for community-building (Hartford Institute for Religion Research a).

Summary

Liberation theology combines Christian principles with political activism to address social injustice, discrimination, and poverty. Megachurches are those with a membership of more than 2,000 regular attendees, and they are a vibrant, growing and highly influential segment of U.S. religious life. Some sociologists believe levels of religiosity in the United States are declining (called secularization), while others observe a rise in fundamentalism.

Further Research

What is a megachurch and how are they changing the face of religion? Read “Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context” at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/megachurch.

Curious about the LGBT religious movement? Visit the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and Human Rights Campaign (HRC) web sites for current news about the growing inclusion of LGBT citizens into their respective religious communities, both in the pews and from the pulpit: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/GLAAD and http://openstaxcollege.org/l/human_rights_campaign.

How do Christians feel about gay marriage? How many Mormons are there in the United States? Check out http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Pew_Forum, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, a research institute examining U.S. religious trends.

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Glossary

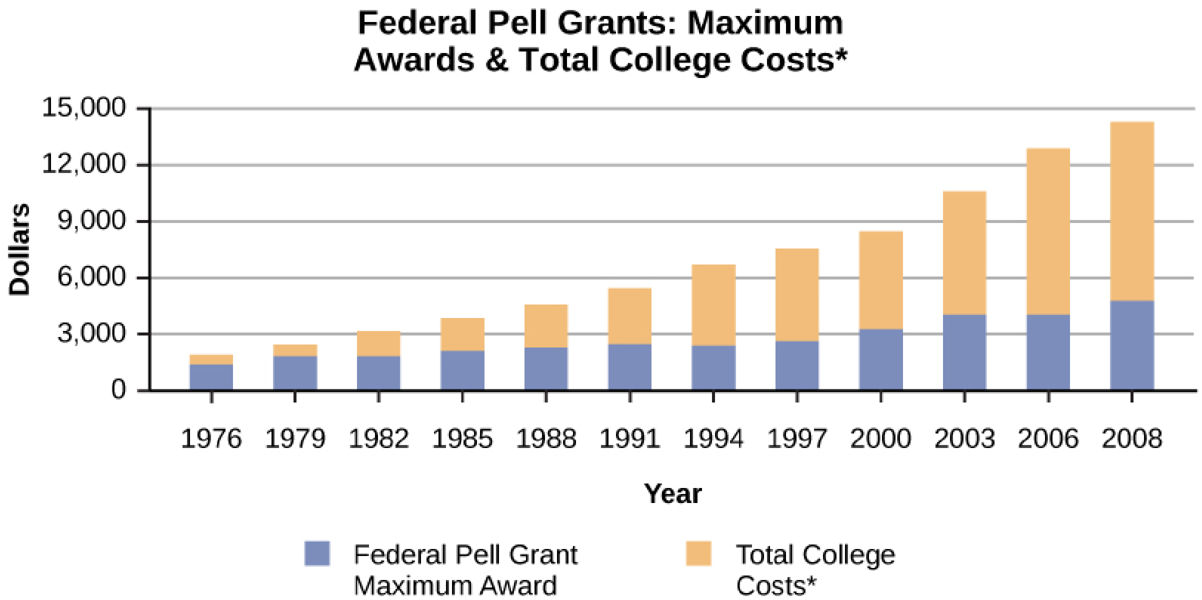
liberation theology
: the use of a church to promote social change via the political arena

megachurch
: a Christian church that has a very large congregation averaging more than 2,000 people who attend regular weekly services

Introduction to Education
class="introduction"

"What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves" (Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed). David Simon, in his book *Social Problems and the Sociological Imagination: A Paradigm for Analysis* (1995), points to the notion that social problems are, in essence, contradictions—that is, statements, ideas, or features of a situation that are opposed to one another. Consider then, that one of the greatest expectations in U.S. society is that to attain any form of success in life, a person needs an education. In fact, a college degree is rapidly becoming an expectation at nearly all levels of middle-class success, not merely an enhancement to our occupational choices. And, as you might expect, the number of people graduating from college in the United States continues to rise dramatically.

The contradiction, however, lies in the fact that the more necessary a college degree has become, the harder it has become to achieve it. The cost of getting a college degree has risen sharply since the mid-1980s, while government support in the form of Pell Grants has barely increased. The net result is that those who do graduate from college are likely to begin a career in debt. As of 2013, the average of amount of a typical student's loans amounted to around $29,000. Added to that is that employment opportunities have not met expectations. The *Washington Post* (Brad Plumer May 20, 2013) notes that in 2010, only 27 percent of college graduates had a job related to their major. The business publication Bloomberg News states that among twenty-two-year-old degree holders who found jobs in the past three years, more than half were in roles not even requiring a college diploma (Janet Lorin and Jeanna Smialek, June 5, 2014).



* Includes tuition, fees, room, and board at a public, four-year university or college. Selected fiscal years, 1976–2008.
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Congressional Research Service, and The College Board.

As can be seen by the trend in the graph, while the Federal Pell Grant maximum has risen slightly between 1976 and 2008, it has not been able to keep pace with the total cost of college.

Is a college degree still worth it? All this is not to say that lifetime earnings among those with a college degree are not, on average, still much higher than for those without. But even with unemployment among degree-earners at a low of 3 percent, the increase in wages over the past decade has remained at a flat 1 percent. And the pay gap between those with a degree and those without has continued to increase because wages for the rest have fallen (David Leonhardt, New York Times, The Upshot, May 27, 2014).

But is college worth more than money?

Generally, the first two years of college are essentially a liberal arts experience. The student is exposed to a fairly broad range of topics, from mathematics and the physical sciences to history and literature, the social sciences, and music and art through introductory and survey-styled courses. It is in this period that the student's world view is, it is hoped, expanded.

Memorization of raw data still occurs, but if the system works, the student now looks at a larger world. Then, when he or she begins the process of specialization, it is with a much broader perspective than might be otherwise. This additional "cultural capital" can further enrich the life of the student, enhance his or her ability to work with experienced professionals, and build wisdom upon knowledge. Over two thousand years ago, Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." The real value of an education, then, is to enhance our skill at self-examination.

A Brief History of CUNY

As a referendum in New York City overwhelmingly supported the foundation of a public institution of higher education for the urban youth, the first tuition-free college in the United Sates, named the "Free Academy," started in 1849. It was renamed the College of the City of New York (CCNY) or “City College” about twenty years later (in 1866), and was further designated The City University of New York (CUNY) in 1961.

In the first half century, this urban college was far from successful; the graduation rate was less than 10%. By the 1920s, however, its graduates’ accomplishments became so impressive that the college (CCNY) began being referred to as the “proletarian Harvard” or an open door for the urban poor to the middle class. Most students who contributed to this were Jews coming from eastern Europe around the turn of the century. About 75% of the student body then comprised Jews, and the rest of them included the Irish, Italians, and native-born Protestants who had initially been the largest part of student body. It was mostly this drastic transformation in the composition of the student body that contributed to the sudden betterment of the reputation of the college.

During the 1950s and 60s, New York City witnessed another drastic transformation in its ethnic composition. About 700,000 blacks and Puerto Ricans replaced a similar number of whites who left in the postwar exodus to the suburbs. They, like traditional white ethnic groups such as Jews and Russians, began demanding equal opportunity for higher education under the transformed economy.

In 1964, in reaction to the demand, the CUNY chancellor obtained funds from the state to set up an experimental admissions program in the community colleges known as College Discovery (CD). In addition, early in the summer of 1966, the state legislature passed a bill providing for an expanded freshman class in the fall. This led to the foundation of a special minority admissions program known as SEEK (“Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge”) in the four-year colleges. This program became the major avenue of minority entry into CUNY’s senior colleges.

BMCC Start Here. Go Anywhere.
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE • CUNY

Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) started in 1964 as a small, primarily business-oriented community college offering programs aimed at the business community. Originally located in two floors of a commercial building in midtown Manhattan, the college focused on preparing students for business careers and on providing a liberal arts education to students who wished to transfer to senior colleges. The college also created on-site training and management development courses for mid-level employees. BMCC continuously modified its in-house and on-site programs.

CUNY Crises

CUNY faced several crises. In the recent past, among others, because of New York City's fiscal crisis in the 1970s, the free tuition policy, which had lasted for more than a century, discontinued in Fall 1976. Equally gravely, in 1999, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's advisory task force on CUNY issued its relentless report, titled "An Institution Adrift." According to this, the graduation rate at CUNY's senior colleges was lower than 10% within 4 years. Also, it pointed out, too many CUNY students relied on remedial courses, which meant, according to the report, that they were not ready for higher education. The task force, thus, concluded CUNY to end its policy of

open admissions to its four-year colleges, requiring new students who needed remediation to start at CUNY open-admissions community colleges.

Tuition-Free Academy, Again

In 2017, New York State officially announced, "We've made college tuition-free for middle class New Yorkers" (NY.Gov 2017). Governor Andrew Cuomo took the idea of tuition free for public colleges/universities from Senator Bernie Sanders's presidential campaign in 2016. Under this program called "The Excelsior Scholarship," more than 940,000 middle-class families and individuals making up to $125,000 per year will qualify to attend college tuition-free at all CUNY and SUNY two- and four-year colleges in New York State. The new program begins in the fall of 2017 and will be phased in over three years. In order to apply, students must:

- Be residents of New York State;
- Attend a SUNY or CUNY two- or four-year degree program;
- Take 30 credits per calendar year (including January and Summer sessions); and
- Plan to live and work in New York following graduation for the length of time they participate in the scholarship program.

In Fall 2018, the total undergraduate enrollment in the entire CUNY system is 274,906 (more than a quarter a million) and that in BMCC, 26,506 (near 10% of the CUNY student body) (OIRA 2019). Of the CUNY student body, 57.8% are female. As for race, 32.4% are Hispanic; 25.5%, Black; 20.3%, White; and 21.4%, Asian. Their average age is 24. Nearly 35% were born outside of the U.S. mainland; 38% say English is not their first language. About 61% say their parents don't have a college degree. Nearly 53% work for pay longer than 20 hours per week.

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Education around the World

- Identify differences in educational resources around the world
- Describe the concept of universal access to education

These children are at a library in Singapore, where students are outperforming U.S. students on worldwide tests. (Photo courtesy of kodomut/flickr)

Education is a social institution through which children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms. When sociologists talk about education, it's about "formal education" handled in schools, rather than informal education in families. Every nation is equipped with formal education today, but school systems vary greatly. The major factors that affect school systems are the resources and budgets. These factors yield educational inequality between, and within, nations.

International differences in education systems are not solely a financial issue. The value placed on education, the amount of time devoted to it, and the distribution of education within a country also play a role in those differences. For example, students in South Korea spend 220 days a year in school, compared to the 180 days a year of their United States counterparts (Pellissier 2010). As of 2006, the United States ranked fifth among twenty-seven countries for college participation, but ranked sixteenth in the number

of students who receive college degrees (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2006). These statistics may be related to how much time is spent on education in the United States.

Then there is the issue of educational distribution within a nation. In December 2010, the results of a test called the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is administered to fifteen-year-old students worldwide, were released. Those results showed that students in the United States had fallen from fifteenth to twenty-fifth in the rankings for science and math (National Public Radio 2010). Students at the top of the rankings hailed from Shanghai, Finland, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

Analysts determined that the nations and city-states at the top of the rankings had several things in common. For one, they had well-established standards for education with clear goals for all students. They also recruited teachers from the top 5 to 10 percent of university graduates each year, which is not the case for most countries (National Public Radio 2010).

Finally, there is the issue of social factors. One analyst from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the organization that created the test, attributed 20 percent of performance differences and the United States' low rankings to differences in social background. Researchers noted that educational resources, including money and quality teachers, are not distributed equitably in the United States. In the top-ranking countries, limited access to resources did not necessarily predict low performance. Analysts also noted what they described as "resilient students," or those students who achieve at a higher level than one might expect given their social background. In Shanghai and Singapore, the proportion of resilient students is about 70 percent. In the United States, it is below 30 percent. These insights suggest that the United States' educational system may be on a descending path that could detrimentally affect the country's economy and its social landscape (National Public Radio 2010).

Note:
Education in Finland

With public education in the United States under such intense criticism, why is it that Singapore, South Korea, and especially Finland (which is culturally most similar to us), have such excellent public education? Over the course of thirty years, the country has pulled itself from among the lowest rankings by the Organization of Economic Cooperation (OEDC) to first in 2012, and remains, as of 2014, in the top five. Contrary to the rigid curriculum and long hours demanded of students in South Korea and Singapore, Finnish education often seems paradoxical to outside observers because it appears to break a lot of the rules we take for granted. It is common for children to enter school at seven years old, and children will have more recess and less hours in school than U.S. children—approximately 300 less hours. Their homework load is light when compared to all other industrialized nations (nearly 300 fewer hours per year in elementary school). There are no gifted programs, almost no private schools, and no high-stakes national standardized tests (Laukkanen 2008; LynNell Hancock 2011).

Prioritization is different than in the United States. There is an emphasis on allocating resources for those who need them most, high standards, support for special needs students, qualified teachers taken from the top 10 percent of the nation's graduates and who must earn a Master's degree, evaluation of education, balancing decentralization and centralization.

"We used to have a system which was really unequal," stated the Finnish Education Chief in an interview. "My parents never had a real possibility to study and have a higher education. We decided in the 1960s that we would provide a free quality education to all. Even universities are free of charge. Equal means that we support everyone and we’re not going to waste anyone’s skills." As for teachers, "We don’t test our teachers or ask them to prove their knowledge. But it’s true that we do invest in a lot of additional teacher training even after they become teachers" (Gross-Loh 2014).

Yet over the past decade Finland has consistently performed among the top nations on the PISA. Finland’s school children didn’t always excel. Finland built its excellent, efficient, and equitable educational system in a few decades from scratch, and the concept guiding almost every educational reform has been equity. The Finnish paradox is that by focusing on the bigger picture for all, Finland has succeeded at fostering the individual potential of most every child.

> "We created a school system based on equality to make sure we can develop everyone’s potential. Now we can see how well it’s been working. Last year the OECD tested adults from twenty-four countries measuring the skill levels of adults aged sixteen to sixty-five on a survey called the PIAAC (Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies), which tests skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments. Finland scored at or near the top on all measures."

Formal and Informal Education

As already mentioned, education is not solely concerned with the basic academic concepts that a student learns in the classroom. Societies also educate their children, outside of the school system, in matters of everyday practical living. These two types of learning are referred to as formal education and informal education.

Formal education describes the learning of academic facts and concepts through a formal curriculum. Arising from the tutelage of ancient Greek thinkers, centuries of scholars have examined topics through formalized methods of learning. Education in earlier times was only available to the higher classes; they had the means for access to scholarly materials, plus the luxury of leisure time that could be used for learning. The Industrial Revolution and its accompanying social changes made education more accessible to the general population. Many families in the emerging middle class found new opportunities for schooling.

The modern U.S. educational system is the result of this progression. Today, basic education is considered a right and responsibility for all citizens. Expectations of this system focus on formal education, with curricula and testing designed to ensure that students learn the facts and concepts that society believes are basic knowledge.

In contrast, **informal education** describes learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviors by participating in a society. This type of learning occurs both through the formal education system and at home. Our earliest learning experiences generally happen via parents, relatives, and

others in our community. Through informal education, we learn how to dress for different occasions, how to perform regular life routines like shopping for and preparing food, and how to keep our bodies clean.

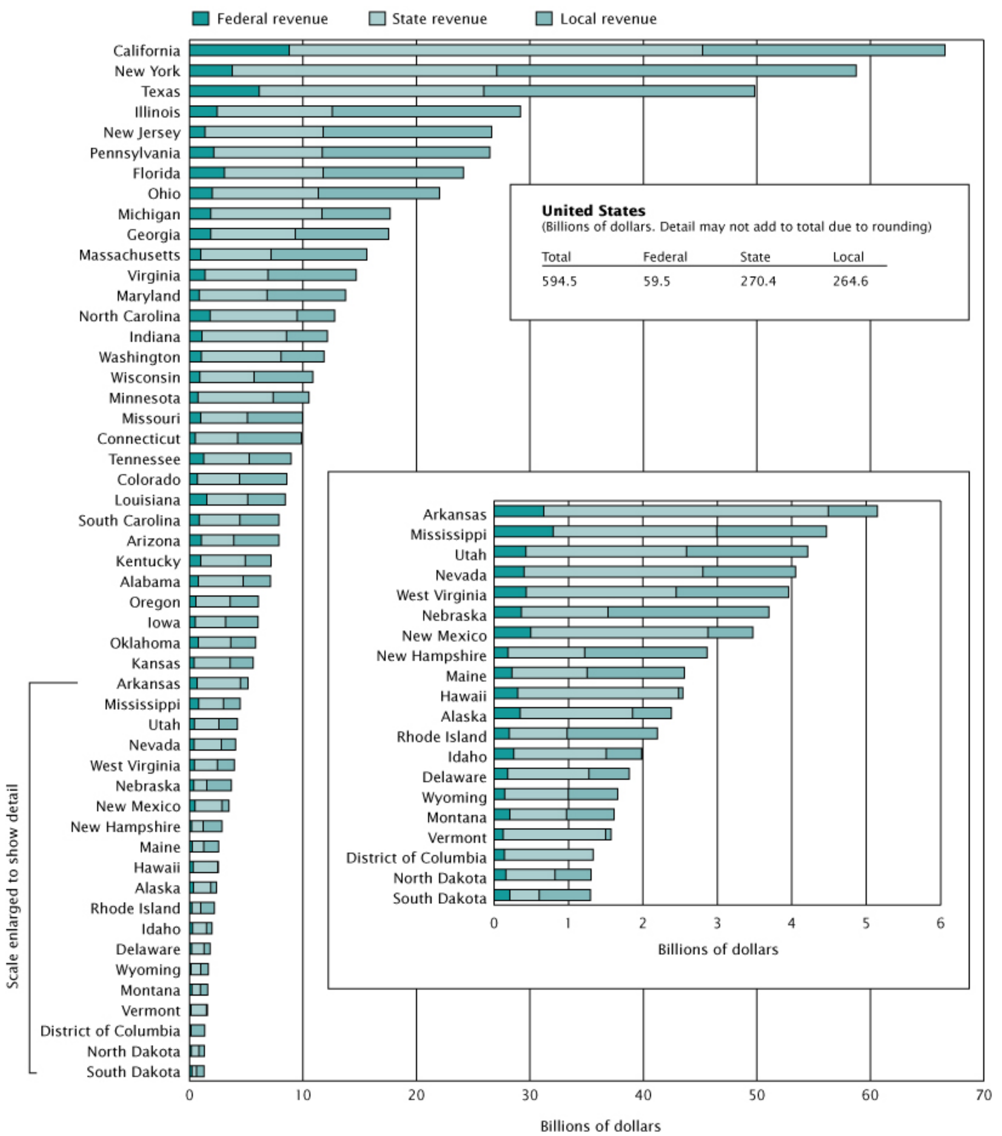
Parents teaching their children to cook provide an informal education. (Photo courtesy of eyeliam/flickr)

Cultural transmission refers to the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture. Both informal and formal education include cultural transmission. For example, a student will learn about cultural aspects of modern history in a U.S. History classroom. In that same classroom, the student might learn the cultural norm for asking a classmate out on a date through passing notes and whispered conversations.

Access to Education

Another global concern in education is **universal access**. This term refers to people’s equal ability to participate in an education system. On a world level, access might be more difficult for certain groups based on class or gender (as was the case in the United States earlier in the nation’s history, a dynamic we still struggle to overcome). The modern idea of universal access arose in the United States as a concern for people with disabilities. In the United States, one way in which universal education is supported is through federal and state governments covering the cost of free public education. Of course, the way this plays out in terms of school budgets and taxes makes this an often-contested topic on the national, state, and community levels.

Figure 1.
Public Elementary-Secondary School System Revenue by Source and State: Fiscal Year 2012



Source: 2012 Census of Governments: Finance—Survey of School System Finances. Data are not subject to sampling error, but for information on nonsampling error and definitions, see introductory text. Data users who create their own estimates from these tables should cite the U.S. Census Bureau as the source of the original data only.

How has your state's revenue affected your educational opportunities? (Graph courtesy of Census of Governments: Survey of School System Finances 2012)

A precedent for universal access to education in the United States was set with the 1972 U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia's decision in *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*. This case was

brought on the behalf of seven school-age children with special needs who argued that the school board was denying their access to free public education. The school board maintained that the children's "exceptional" needs, which included mental retardation and mental illness, precluded their right to be educated for free in a public school setting. The board argued that the cost of educating these children would be too expensive and that the children would therefore have to remain at home without access to education.

This case was resolved in a hearing without any trial. The judge, Joseph Cornelius Waddy, upheld the students' right to education, finding that they were to be given either public education services or private education paid for by the Washington, D.C., board of education. He noted that

> Constitutional rights must be afforded citizens despite the greater expense involved … the District of Columbia's interest in educating the excluded children clearly must outweigh its interest in preserving its financial resources. … The inadequacies of the District of Columbia Public School System whether occasioned by insufficient funding or administrative inefficiency, certainly cannot be permitted to bear more heavily on the "exceptional" or handicapped child than on the normal child (*Mills v. Board of Education* 1972).

Today, the optimal way to include differently abled students in standard classrooms is still being researched and debated. "Inclusion" is a method that involves complete immersion in a standard classroom, whereas "mainstreaming" balances time in a special-needs classroom with standard classroom participation. There continues to be social debate surrounding how to implement the ideal of universal access to education.

Summary

Educational systems around the world have many differences, though the same factors—including resources and money—affect every educational

system. Educational distribution is a major issue in many nations, including in the United States, where the amount of money spent per student varies greatly by state. Education happens through both formal and informal systems; both foster cultural transmission. Universal access to education is a worldwide concern.

Further Research

Though it's a struggle, education is continually being improved in the developing world. To learn how educational programs are being fostered worldwide, explore the Education section of the Center for Global Development's website: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/center_global_development

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Glossary

cultural transmission
: the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture

education
: a social institution through which a society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms

formal education
: the learning of academic facts and concepts

informal education
: education that involves learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviors through participation in a society

universal access
: the equal ability of all people to participate in an education system

Theoretical Perspectives on Education

- Define manifest and latent functions of education
- Explain and discuss how functionalism, conflict theory, feminism, and interactionism view issues of education

While it is clear that education plays an integral role in individuals' lives as well as society as a whole, sociologists view that role from many diverse points of view. Functionalists believe that education equips people to perform different functional roles in society. Conflict theorists view education as a means of widening the gap in social inequality. Feminist theorists point to evidence that sexism in education continues to prevent women from achieving a full measure of social equality. Symbolic interactionists study the dynamics of the classroom, the interactions between students and teachers, and how those affect everyday life. In this section, you will learn about each of these perspectives.

Functionalism

Functionalists view education as one of the most important social institutions. They contend that education contributes two kinds of functions: manifest (or primary) functions, which are planned and intended; and latent (or secondary) functions, which are unintended and hidden. In other words, **manifest functions** are good things resulting from the main purpose of the system and **latent functions**, good things resulting not from the main purpose of the system.

Manifest functions in formal education include skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, i.e., academic knowledge and learning skills. On the other hand, latent functions in formal education include making friends, learning punctuality (the importance of time), learning how to behave in formal settings such as class meetings, and so on.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists do not believe that public schools reduce social inequality. Rather, they believe that the educational system reinforces and perpetuates

social inequalities that arise from differences in class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Where functionalists see education as serving a beneficial role, conflict theorists view it in more critical lens. To them, educational systems help preserve the status quo and push people of lower status into obedience.

Conflict theorists see the education system as a means by which those in power stay in power. (Photo courtesy Thomas Ricker/flickr)

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu coined the term **cultural capital**, cultural knowledge that can be used as if it were money. Other than cultural capital, Bourdieu offers several forms of capital, including financial capital (things that have monetary values), social capital (network of people who help each other), and symbolic capital (honor, prestige, or recognition).

Possessing cultural capital can be understood as the same thing as sharing "class traits" of middle class, rather than those of lower class. It's a status-induced familiarity with legitimate culture (Bourdieu 1979 [1984]), which helps you go up to (or stay in) middle class. Job interviewers, for example, share middle-class traits, such as what Durkheim, Marx, and Weber said, and if an interviewee understands these, his/her application can be considered. For example:

> The interviewer: Oh yeah, you took a sociology course at BMCC? Great! I took it, too, several years ago, though. Was that Professor Hyodo? Anyway, then, let me ask you this: who said "religion is the opium of the people?"
> You: Ah... Kendrick Lamar? Right?
> The interviewer: ...

Well, in this case, it may be a kind of "forget-about-it." Bourdieu and many other sociologists suggest, again, that "class reproduces itself." Upward mobility from lower class to middle class is not easy, but education (including cultural capital) is a breakthrough.

The cycle of rewarding those who possess cultural capital is found in formal educational curricula as well as in the **hidden curriculum**, a kind of latent function which refers to the type of nonacademic knowledge that students learn through informal learning and cultural transmission. This hidden curriculum reinforces the positions of those with higher cultural capital and serves to maintain status unequally.

Conflict theorists point to **tracking**, a formalized sorting system that places students on “tracks” (advanced versus low achievers) that can help perpetuate inequalities. The matching of students to different high school programs, based on teachers' subjective views or prejudice against their students, has carried with it racial, ethnic, and social-class overtones. As a result, immigrant, poor, and minority youth are more often enrolled in low-level academic and vocational training, and middle-class whites are more often enrolled in academic, college-prep classes (National Center for Research 1992).

To conflict theorists, schools play the role of training working-class students to accept and retain their position as lower members of society. They argue that this role is fulfilled through the disparity of resources available to students in richer and poorer neighborhoods as well as through testing (Lauen and Tyson 2008).

IQ (intelligence quotient) tests have been attacked for being biased—for testing cultural knowledge rather than intelligence, cultural knowledge of white middle class. One question, for example, asked which of the

following words best matched the word “cup”--“wall,” “saucer,” “table,” or “window.” An African-American boy chose “table” because in his house, there are no saucers to put under the cups (Hoffpost 2017). His IQ test score was low. Is it fair?

Though experts in testing claim that bias has been eliminated from tests, conflict theorists maintain that it is impossible. To conflict theorists, these tests, made mostly by those who share the white-middle-class cultural knowledge, are another way in which education does not provide opportunities, but instead helps maintain an established configuration of power.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory aims to understand the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education, as well as their societal repercussions. Like many other institutions of society, educational systems are characterized by unequal treatment and opportunity for women. Almost two-thirds of the world’s 862 million illiterate people are women, and the illiteracy rate among women is expected to increase in many regions, especially in several African and Asian countries (UNESCO 2005; World Bank 2007).

Women in the United States have been relatively late, historically speaking, to be granted entry to the public university system. In fact, it wasn’t until the establishment of Title IX of the Education Amendments in 1972 that discriminating on the basis of sex in U.S. education programs became illegal. In the United States, there is also a post-education gender disparity between what male and female college graduates earn. A study released in May 2011 showed that, among men and women who graduated from college between 2006 and 2010, men out-earned women by an average of more than $5,000 each year. First-year job earnings for men averaged $33,150; for women the average was $28,000 (Godofsky, Zukin, and van Horn 2011). Similar trends are seen among salaries of professionals in virtually all industries.

When women face limited opportunities for education, their capacity to achieve equal rights, including financial independence, are limited.

Feminist theory seeks to promote women’s rights to equal education (and its resultant benefits) across the world.

Note:

Grade Inflation: When Is an A Really a C?

Consider a large-city newspaper publisher. Ten years ago, when culling résumés for an entry-level copywriter, they were well assured that if they selected a grad with a GPA of 3.7 or higher, they’d have someone with the writing skills to contribute to the workplace on day one. But over the last few years, they’ve noticed that A-level students don’t have the competency evident in the past. More and more, they find themselves in the position of educating new hires in abilities that, in the past, had been mastered during their education.

This story illustrates a growing concern referred to as **grade inflation**—a term used to describe the observation that the correspondence between letter grades and the achievements they reflect has been changing (in a downward direction) over time. Put simply, what used to be considered C-level, or average, now often earns a student a B, or even an A.

Why is this happening? Research on this emerging issue is ongoing, so no one is quite sure yet. Some cite the alleged shift toward a culture that rewards effort instead of product, i.e., the amount of work a student puts in raises the grade, even if the resulting product is poor quality. Another oft-cited contributor is the pressure many of today’s instructors feel to earn positive course evaluations from their students—records that can tie into teacher compensation, award of tenure, or the future career of a young grad teaching entry-level courses. The fact that these reviews are commonly posted online exacerbates this pressure.

Other studies don’t agree that grade inflation exists at all. In any case, the issue is hotly debated, with many being called upon to conduct research to help us better understand and respond to this trend (National Public Radio 2004; Mansfield 2005).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism sees education as one way that labeling theory is seen in action. A symbolic interactionist might say that this labeling has a direct correlation to those who are in power and those who are labeled. For example, low standardized test scores or poor performance in a particular class often lead to a student who is labeled as a low achiever. Such labels are difficult to "shake off," which can create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1968).

In his book *High School Confidential*, Jeremy Iverson details his experience as a Stanford graduate posing as a student at a California high school. One of the problems he identifies in his research is that of teachers applying labels that students are never able to lose. One teacher told him, without knowing he was a bright graduate of a top university, that he would never amount to anything (Iverson 2006). Iverson obviously didn't take this teacher's false assessment to heart. But when an actual seventeen-year-old student hears this from a person with authority over her, it's no wonder that the student might begin to "live down to" that label.

The labeling with which symbolic interactionists concern themselves extends to the very degrees that symbolize completion of education. **Credentialism** embodies the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that the applicant for the job has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, and has met certain job qualifications. This phenomenon began growing during the mode of economy shifting from industrial (blue-collar jobs) to postindustrial (white-collar jobs) among core nations. This requires applicants for good jobs to submit their resume showing, mostly, their education level, a symbol of their achievement.

Indeed, as these examples show, labeling theory can significantly impact a student's schooling. This is easily seen in the educational setting, as teachers and more powerful social groups within the school dole out labels that are adopted by the entire school population.

Summary

The major sociological theories offer insight into how we understand education. Functionalists view education as an important social institution

that contributes both manifest and latent functions. Functionalists see education as serving the needs of society by preparing students for later roles, or functions, in society. Conflict theorists see schools as a means for perpetuating class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities. In the same vein, feminist theory focuses specifically on the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education. The theory of symbolic interactionism focuses on education as a means for labeling individuals.

Further Research

Can tracking actually improve learning? This 2009 article from *Education Next* explores the debate with evidence from Kenya. http://openstaxcollege.org/l/education_next

The National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) is committed to ending the bias and other flaws seen in standardized testing. Their mission is to ensure that students, teachers, and schools are evaluated fairly. You can learn more about their mission, as well as the latest in news on test bias and fairness, at their website: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/fair_test

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Glossary

credentialism
: the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications

cultural capital
: cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency to help one navigate a culture

grade inflation
: the idea that the achievement level associated with an A today is notably lower than the achievement level associated with A-level work

a few decades ago

hidden curriculum
the type of nonacademic knowledge that people learn through informal learning and cultural transmission

social placement
the use of education to improve one’s social standing

sorting
classifying students based on academic merit or potential

tracking
a formalized sorting system that places students on “tracks” (advanced, low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities

Issues in Education

- Identify and discuss historical and contemporary issues in education

As schools strive to fill a variety of roles in their students' lives, many issues and challenges arise. Students walk a minefield of bullying, violence in schools, the results of declining funding, plus other problems that affect their education. When Americans are asked about their opinion of public education on the Gallup poll each year, reviews are mixed at best (Saad 2008). Schools are no longer merely a place for learning and socializing. With the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling in 1954, schools became a repository of much political and legal action that is at the heart of several issues in education.

Equal Education

"Separate but Equal" Ruled to Be Unconstitutional
Until 1954, schools had operated under the precedent set by *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, which allowed racial segregation in schools and private businesses (the case dealt specifically with railroads) and introduced the much maligned phrase "separate but equal" into the U.S. lexicon. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision overruled this, declaring that state laws that had established separate schools for black and white students were, in fact, unequal and unconstitutional.

Arkansas against the Ruling
While the ruling paved the way toward civil rights, it was also met with contention in many communities. In Arkansas in 1957, the governor mobilized the state National Guard to prevent black students from entering Little Rock Central High School. President Eisenhower, in response, sent members of the U.S. Army to uphold the students' right to enter the school.

Alabama: "Segregation Now, Segregation Tomorrow, Segregation Forever"
In 1963, almost 10 years after the ruling, Governor George Wallace of Alabama used his own body to block two black students from entering the auditorium at the University of Alabama to enroll in the school. Wallace's

desperate attempt to uphold his policy of “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever,” stated during his 1963 inauguration (PBS 2000) became known as the “Stand in the Schoolhouse Door.” He refused to grant entry to the students until a general from the Alabama National Guard arrived on President Kennedy’s order.

President Eisenhower sent members of the U.S. Army to escort black students into Little Rock Central High School after the governor of Arkansas tried to deny them entry. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

Presently, students of all races and ethnicities are permitted into schools, but there remains a troubling gap in the equality of education they receive. The long-term socially embedded effects of racism—and other discrimination and disadvantage—have left a residual mark of inequality in the nation’s education system. Students from wealthy families and those of lower socioeconomic status do not receive the same opportunities.

Today's public schools, including CUNY, are positioned to help remedy those gaps. Predicated on the notion of universal access, this system is mandated to accept and retain all students regardless of race, religion, social class, and the like. Moreover, public schools are held accountable to equitable per-student spending (Resnick 2004). Private schools, usually only accessible to students from high-income families, and schools in more affluent areas generally enjoy access to greater resources and better opportunities. In fact, some of the key predictors for student performance include social class and family background. Lower-class children often enter school with learning deficits they struggle to overcome throughout their educational tenure. These patterns, uncovered in the landmark Coleman Report of 1966, are still highly relevant today, as sociologists still generally agree that there is a great divide in the performance of middle-class whites and lower-class nonwhites (Coleman 1966).

Head Start

The findings in the Coleman Report were so powerful that they brought about two major changes to education in the United States. The federal **Head Start program**, which is still active and successful today, was developed to give low-income students an opportunity to make up the preschool deficit discussed in Coleman's findings. The program provides academic-centered preschool to students of low socioeconomic status.

Busing

The second major change brought about after the release of the Coleman Report was less successful than the Head Start program and has been the subject of a great deal of controversy. With the goal of further desegregating education, courts across the United States ordered some school districts to begin a program that became known as "busing." This program involved bringing students to schools outside their neighborhoods (and therefore schools they would not normally have the opportunity to attend) to bring racial diversity into balance. This practice was met with a great deal of public resistance from people on both sides dissatisfied with white students

traveling to inner city schools and minority students bring transported to schools in the suburbs.

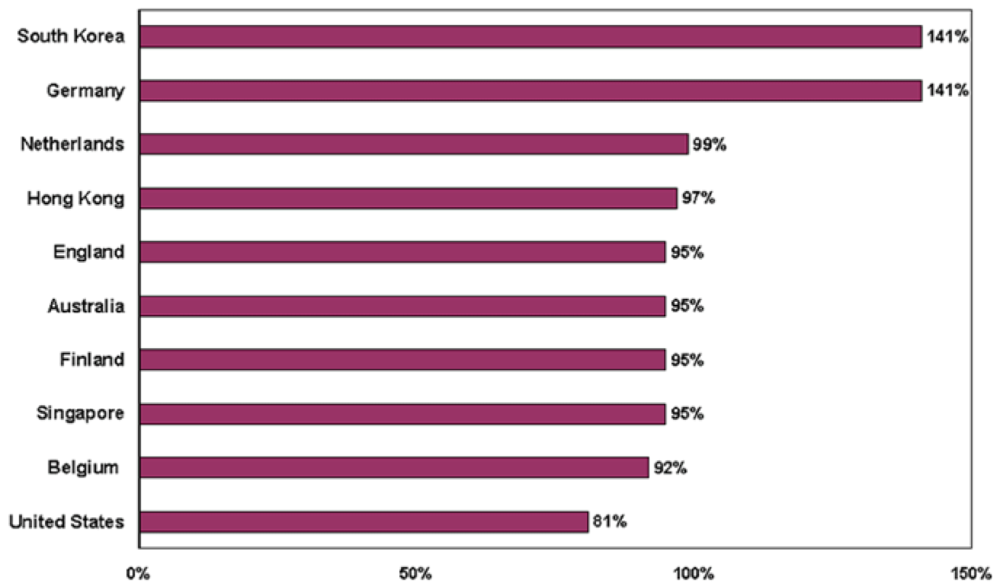
No Child Left Behind

In 2001, the Bush administration passed the **No Child Left Behind Act** (NCLB), which requires states to test students in designated grades. The results of those tests determine eligibility to receive federal funding. Schools that do not meet the standards set by the Act run the risk of having their funding cut. Sociologists and teachers alike have contended that the impact of the NCLB is far more negative than positive, arguing that a “one size fits all” concept cannot apply to education.

The goal of the NCLB was audacious--by 2014, the law decreed, 100% of students would perform at grade level. Nonetheless, things have gotten worse instead by almost every measure (New York Times 2015). Students in the U.S. lag behind, compared to their counterparts in many other nations. The NCLB was dysfunctional. Without spending extra budgets, it gave schools, teachers, and students a lot of pressures, threatening rather the budget cut for schools that didn't meet the criteria.

By 2015, criticisms of the NCLB grew straightforward from both Democrats and Republicans. The Congress, finally, decided to remove the punishment rule on the federal level given to states and districts that performed poorly. Not only that, but the federal government at this time also lost its power to impose academic requirements to public schools in any fashion.

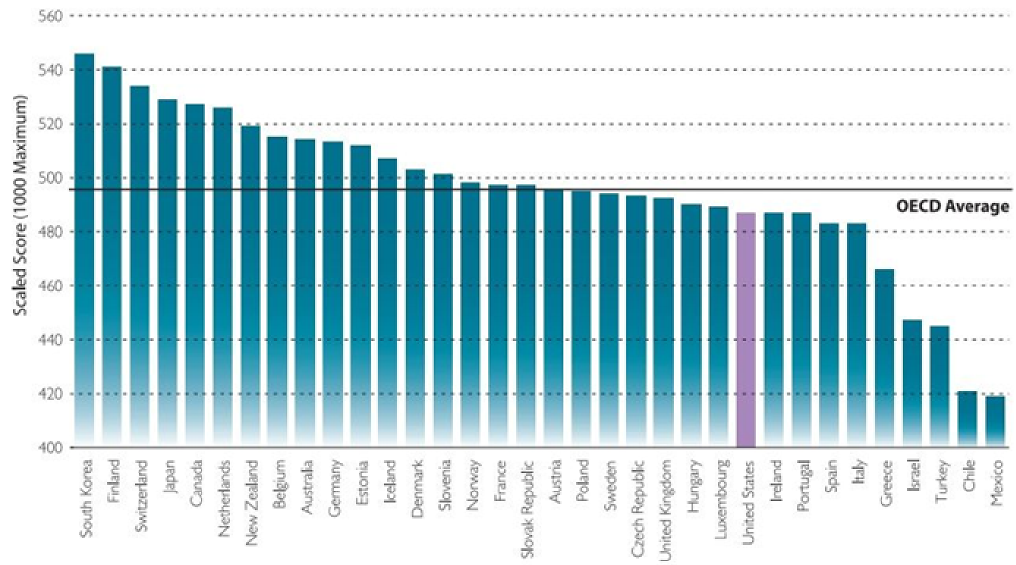
Starting Salaries of Teachers, % of GDP per capita, Selected Countries, 2007



Source: McKinsey & Company

See the image above ("Starting Salaries of Teachers"). In South Korea and Germany, starting salaries for teachers are about 141% of GDP per capita, while the figure for the United States is only 81% (Economic Policy Institute 2008). In fact, all countries in this sample pay their teachers a significantly higher relative wage as a starting salary compared to the United States. While school teachers in South Korea are considered middle class, those in the U.S. are lower class. Keep this in mind and see below ("Average Mathematics Test Scores for 15-Year-Olds").

Average Mathematics Test Scores for 15-Year-Olds, OECD Countries, 2009

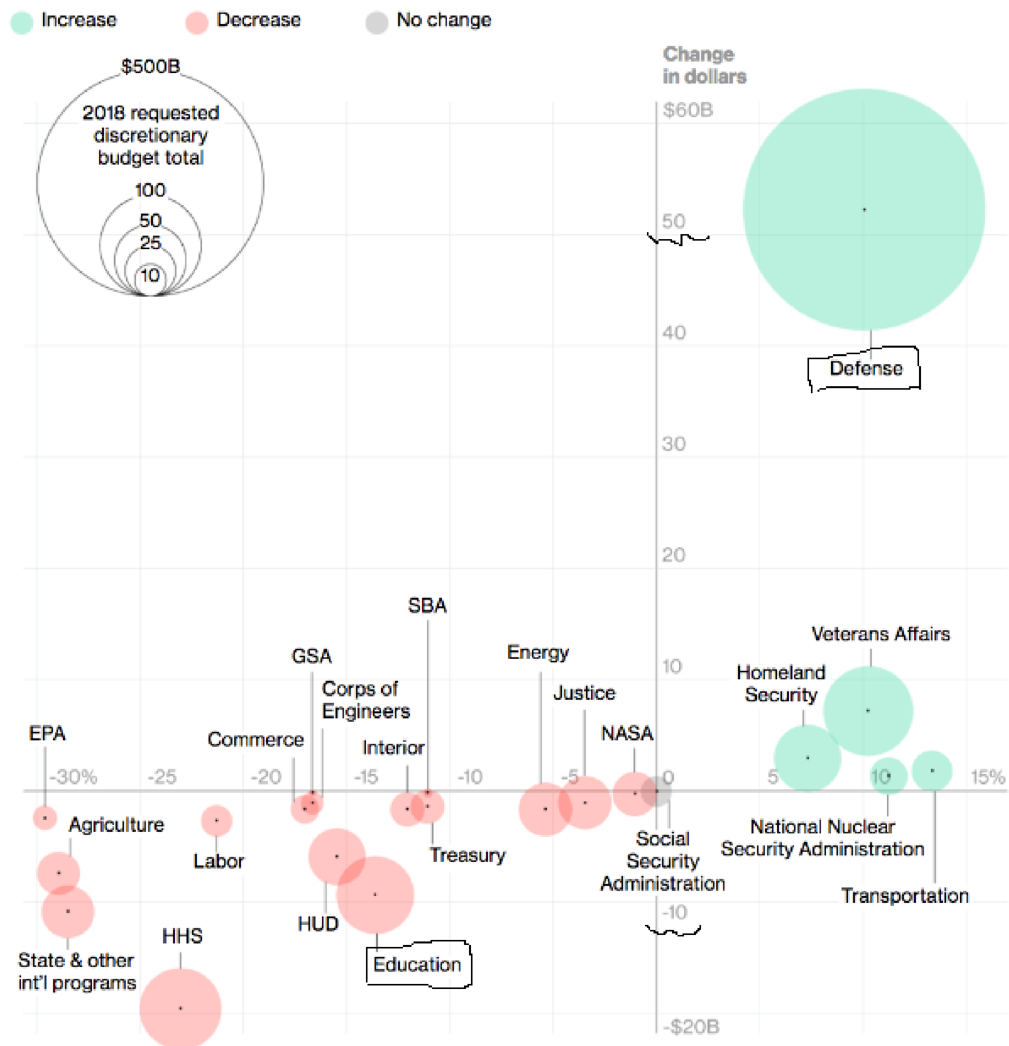


Source: OECD, Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2009

According to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2009), there seems to be a positive relationship between teachers' salaries and their students' performance in math tests. It is positive because the two variables (salaries and test scores) face the same direction. That is, the higher the salaries are, the higher the test scores tend to be.

The United States is the world champion in terms of the GDP (gross domestic product)--i.e., the total amount of money transacted in a county in a given period of time, including the government spending plus the value of exports minus that of imports. Nevertheless, American teachers' salaries are pitifully low, and their students' performance level is embarrassingly low, as well, compared to most other countries included in the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). How does the U.S. spend the budgets?

Proposed changes to agency discretionary budgets in 2018



Source: Bloomberg

The image above presents the U.S. budgets under the Trump administration in 2018. The color blue indicates the increase and the color pink, the decrease. The size of the circle indicates the size of the budgets. "Defense," whose size is the largest among other circles, is blue (a big increase). By contrast, "education," whose size is way smaller than "defense," is pink (a decease).

Most other institutions that serve ordinary people, such as "HHS" (health and human services), "HUD" (housing and urban development), "EPA" (environmental protection agency), "SBA" (small business administration), are all pink, too. "Defense" is important, of course, but how is the budget spent for it, specifically?

Many scholars and journalists point out that a small number of powerful people including top politicians, top business leaders, and top leaders in Pentagon (U.S. military) *unofficially* organize what President Dwight Eisenhower in his farewell address in 1961 called the **military-industrial complex**. Such people move around between politics, business, and military in order to serve themselves, exchanging honorable positions, money, and power. (Our discussions will continue in Ch. 17, Government and Politics.)

Bilingual Education

New issues of inequality have entered the national conversation in recent years with the issue of bilingual education, which attempts to give equal opportunity to minority students through offering instruction in languages other than English. Though it is actually an old issue (bilingual education was federally mandated in 1968), it remains one of hot debate. Supporters of bilingual education argue that all students deserve equal opportunities in education—opportunities some students cannot access without instruction in their first language. On the other side, those who oppose bilingual education often point to the need for English fluency in everyday life and in the professional world.

Common Core

"The Common Core is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade." Included in the list of standards is that they be evidence-based, clear, understandable, consistent, aligned with college and career expectations, include the application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills, and are informed by other top-performing countries (The Common Core State Standards Initiative 2014).

The primary controversy over the Common Core State Standards, or simply the Common Core, from the standpoint of teachers, parents and students, and even administrators, is not so much the standards themselves, but the assessment process and the high stakes involved. Both the national teacher's unions in the United States initially agreed to them, at least in principle. But

both have since become strong voices of criticism. Given a public education system that is primarily funded by local property taxes, rather than by state and federal funds distributed to all schools equally, we see a wide disparity of funding per student throughout the country, with the result that students in schools funded by well-to-do communities are clearly better off than those who are not, sometimes only a few miles away.

What gets measured?

Much has been said about the quality, usefulness, and even accuracy of many of the standardized tests. Math questions have been found to be misleading and poorly phrased; for instance, “Tyler made 36 total snowfalls with is a multiple of how triangular snowflakes he made. How many triangular snowflakes could he have made?”

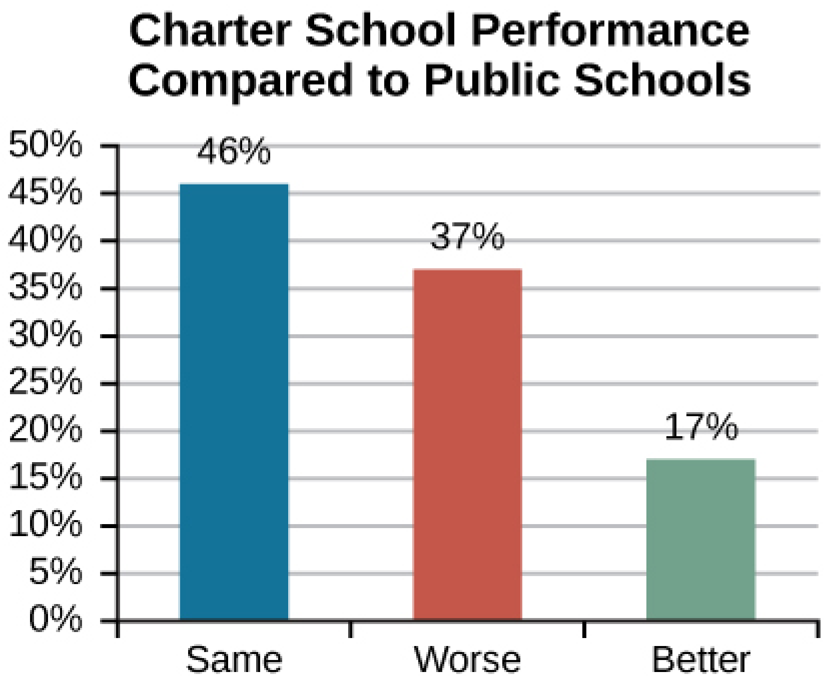
Some of the essays had questions that made little sense to the students. One notable test question in 2014 that dominated the Internet for a time was about "The Hare and the Pineapple." This was a parody on the well-known Aesop fable of the race between the hare and the tortoise that appeared on a standardized test for New York's eighth-grade exam, with the tortoise changed into a talking pineapple. With the pineapple clearly unable to participate in a race and the hare winning, "the animals ate the pineapple." "Moral: Pineapples don’t have sleeves."

At the end of the story, questions for the student included, "Which animal spoke the wisest words?" and "Why did the animals eat the talking fruit?"

Charter Schools

Charter schools are self-governing public schools that have signed agreements with state governments to improve students when poor performance is revealed on tests required by the No Child Left Behind Act. While such schools receive public money, they are not subject to the same rules that apply to regular public schools. In return, they make agreements to achieve specific results. Charter schools, as part of the public education system, are free to attend, and are accessible via lottery when there are more

students seeking enrollment than there are spots available at the school. Some charter schools specialize in certain fields, such as the arts or science, while others are more generalized.



The debate over the performance of charter schools vs. public schools is a charged one. Dozens of studies have been made on the topic, and some, as reflected in Stanford's CREDO study above, do not support the claim that charter schools always outperform public schools. (Source: Based on the CREDO study Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States)

Note:
Money as Motivation in Charter Schools

Public school teachers typically find stability, comprehensive benefits packages, and long-term job security. In 2011, one charter school in New York City set out to learn if teachers would give up those protections if it meant an opportunity to make much more money than the typical teacher's salary. The Equity Project is a privately run charter school that offered teachers positions paying $125,000 per year (more than twice the average salary for teachers). The school's founder and principal, Zeke Vanderhoek, explained that this allows him to attract the best and brightest teachers to his school—to decide whom he hires and how much they are paid—and build a school where "every teacher is a great teacher" (CBS News 2011). He sees attracting top teachers as a direct road to student achievement. A nationwide talent search resulted in the submission of thousands of applications. The final round of interviews consisted of a day-long trial run. The school looks for teachers who can show evidence of student growth and achievement. They also must be highly engaging.

The majority of students at the school are African American and Hispanic, from poor families, and reading below grade level. The school faces the challenge faced by schools all over the United States: getting poor, disadvantaged students to perform at the same level as their more affluent counterparts. Vanderhoek believes his team of dream teachers can help students close their learning gaps by several grade levels within one year. This is not an affluent school. It is publicly funded and classes are held in trailers. Most of the school's budget goes into the teachers' salaries. There are no reading or math aides; those roles are filled by the regular classroom teachers.

The experiment may be working. Students who were asked how they feel about their education at The Equity Project said that their teachers care if they succeed and give them the attention they need to achieve at high levels. They cite the feeling that their teachers believe in them as a major reason for liking school for the first time.

Of course, with the high salary comes high risk. Most public schools offer contracts to teachers. Those contracts guarantee job security. But The Equity Project is an at-will employer. Those who don't meet the standards set by the school will lose their jobs. Vanderhoek does not believe in teacher tenure, which he feels gives teachers "a job for life no matter how they perform" (CBS News 2011). With a teaching staff of roughly fifteen, he terminated two teachers after the first year. In comparison, in New York

City as a whole, only seven teachers out of 55,000 with tenure have been terminated for poor performance.
One of those two teachers who was let go said she was relieved, citing eighty- to ninety-hour work weeks and a decline in the quality of her family life. Meanwhile, there is some question as to whether the model is working. On one hand, there are individual success stories, such as a student whose reading skills increased two grade levels in a single year. On the other, there is the fact that on the state math and reading exams taken by all fifth graders, the Equity Project students remained out-scored by other district schools (CBS News 2011). Do charter schools actually work? A Stanford CREDO study in 2009 found "there is a wide variance in the quality of the nation's several thousand charter schools with, in the aggregate, students in charter schools not faring as well as students in traditional public schools" (CREDO 2009).

Teacher Training

Schools face an issue of teacher effectiveness, in that most high school teachers perceive students as being prepared for college, while most college professors do not see those same students as prepared for the rigors of collegiate study. Some feel that this is due to teachers being unprepared to teach. Many teachers in the United States teach subject matter that is outside their own field of study. This is not the case in many European and Asian countries. Only eight percent of United States fourth-grade math teachers majored or minored in math, compared with 48 percent in Singapore. Further, students in disadvantaged American schools are 77 percent more likely to be educated by a teacher who didn't specialize in the subject matter than students who attend schools in affluent neighborhoods (Holt, McGrath, and Seastrom 2006).

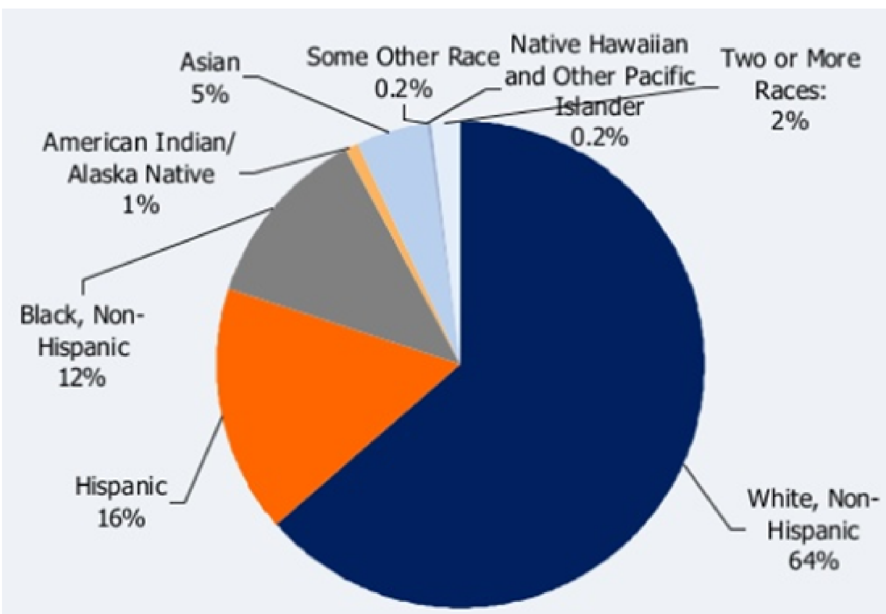
Social Promotion

Social promotion is a controversial issue identified by educators and social scientists. This is the policy of passing students to the next grade regardless of how they perform. Critics of this practice argue that students should

never move to the next grade if they have not mastered the skills required to “graduate” from the previous grade. Proponents of the practice question what a school is to do with a student who is three to four years older than other students in his/her grade, saying that this creates more issues than the practice of social promotion.

In New York City, Mayor Bloomberg stopped this policy in 2003 for third graders, extending for seventh graders, as well, in 2005. These decisions triggered hot debates, as mentioned above. In 2014, however, Mayor de Blasio revived the policy. This also triggered hot, hot debates, as well. New York Post (2014), for example, argues: Looks as if the bad old days of “social promotion” are returning to New York City public schools. The de Blasio administration scrapped the results of standardized exams as the chief measure for determining promotions in grades 3 through 8..."

Affirmative Action, a Quota System?



Source: U.S. Census 2010 (Courtesy of slideshare.net)

Affirmative action policies are those in which an institution or organization actively engages in efforts to improve opportunities for historically excluded groups in American society (NCSL 2014). Affirmative action policies often focus on employment and education. In institutions of higher education, affirmative action refers to admission

policies that provide equal access to education for those groups that have been historically excluded or underrepresented, such as women and minorities. Controversy surrounding the constitutionality of affirmative action programs has made the topic one of the most heated debates. Below are typical opinions of "pros" and "cons."

> Pros: Affirmative action fights racism and compensates the past.
> Cons: Affirmative action is reverse racism and punishes whites and Asians who are not responsible to the past.

Lawsuits have been filed against universities that support the affirmative action policies, most notably, the University of Michigan. The white students who sued the university claimed that using race and/or gender as a factor in admissions is a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment or Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (CNN 2019).

As the cases went up, in each step, one court decision was overruled by another. For a lawsuit eventually going up to the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003, the decision very narrowly supported the affirmative action policies, by a vote of five to four (CNN 2019). This decision by no means was the very final. Another lawsuits against another universities are filed one after another...

Rising Student Loan Debt

In a growing concern, the amount of college loan debt that students are taking on is creating a new social challenge. As of 2010, the debts of students with student loans averaged $25,250 upon graduation, leaving students hard-pressed to repay their education while earning entry-level wages, even at the professional level (Lewin 2011). With the increase in unemployment since the 2008 recession, jobs are scarce and make this burden more pronounced. As recent grads find themselves unable to meet their financial obligations, all of society is affected.

Home Schooling

Homeschooling refers to children being educated in their own homes, typically by a parent, instead of in a traditional public or private school system. Proponents of this type of education argue that it provides an outstanding opportunity for student-centered learning while circumventing problems that plague today's education system. Opponents counter that homeschooled children miss out on the opportunity for social development that occurs in standard classroom environments and school settings.

Proponents say that parents know their own children better than anyone else and are thus best equipped to teach them. Those on the other side of the debate assert that childhood education is a complex task and requires the degree teachers spend four years earning. After all, they argue, a parent may know her child's body better than anyone, yet she seeks out a doctor for her child's medical treatment. Just as a doctor is a trained medical expert, teachers are trained education experts.

The National Center for Education Statistics shows that the quality of the national education system isn't the only major concern of homeschoolers. While nearly half cite their reason for homeschooling as the belief that they can give their child a better education than the school system can, just under 40 percent choose homeschooling for "religious reasons" (NCES 2008).

To date, researchers have not found consensus in studies evaluating the success, or lack thereof, of homeschooling.

Summary

As schools continue to fill many roles in the lives of students, challenges arise. Historical issues include the racial desegregation of schools, marked by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling. In today's diverse educational landscape, socioeconomic status and diversity remain at the heart of issues in education, with programs such as the Head Start program attempting to give students equal footing. Other educational issues that impact society include charter schools, teaching to the test, student loan debt, and homeschooling.

One hot topic is the Common Core State Standards, or the Common Core. The primary controversy over the Common Core, from the standpoint of teachers, parents and students, and even administrators, is not so much the standards themselves, but the assessment process and the high stakes involved

Further Research

Whether or not students in public schools are entitled to free speech is a subject of much debate. In the public school system, there can be a clash between the need for a safe learning environment and the guarantee to free speech granted to U.S. citizens. You can learn more about this complicated issue at the Center for Public Education. http://openstaxcollege.org/l/center_public_education

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Glossary

Head Start program
: a federal program that provides academically focused preschool to students of low socioeconomic status

No Child Left Behind Act
: an act that requires states to test students in prescribed grades, with the results of those tests determining eligibility to receive federal funding

# Introduction to Aging and the Elderly
class="introduction"

Madame Jeanne Calment of France was the world's oldest living person until she died at 122 years old; there are currently six women in the world whose ages are well documented as 115 years or older (Diebel 2014).

People who lived for 100 years are called **centenarians**. In 2010, there were about 80,000 centenarians in the United States alone. They make up one of the fastest-growing segments of the population (Boston University School of Medicine 2014).

The older population is defined as age 65 or above. As of 2013, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that 14.1% of the total U.S. population is 65 years old or older.

Japan is home to the oldest citizenry in the world, with 28.4% of its population being 65 years of age or older in 2018 (Japan Times 2019). The number of Japanese aged 90 or older reached 2.31 million, including over 71,000 centenarians, close to that in the U.S. (80,000), although the Japanese population is about one third of the U.S. population. Italy is currently the second most aged society, with above 23% of its population being 65 or older, and Portugal which came third, it is 22.4%.

People nowadays live way longer than before. Is that a happy thing? It used to be so. But today, it's not necessarily so. This chapter introduces the aging issues taking place in various forms, be they physical, economic, social, psychological, and so on.

Society's view of the elderly is likely to change as the population ages. (Photo courtesy of sima

dimitric/flickr
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Glossary

supercentenarians
: people 110 of age or older

Who Are the Elderly? Aging in Society

- Understand the difference between senior age groups (young-old, middle-old, and old-old)
- Describe the "graying of the United States" as the population experiences increased life expectancies
- Examine aging as a global issue

One hindrance to society's fuller understanding of aging is that people rarely understand the process of aging until they reach old age themselves. (As opposed to childhood, for instance, which we can all look back on.) Therefore, myths and assumptions about the elderly and aging are common. Many stereotypes exist surrounding the realities of being an older adult. While individuals often encounter stereotypes associated with race and gender and are thus more likely to think critically about them, many people accept age stereotypes without question (Levy 2002). Each culture has a certain set of expectations and assumptions about aging, all of which are part of our socialization.

While the landmarks of maturing into adulthood are a source of pride, signs of natural aging can be cause for shame or embarrassment. Some people try to fight off the appearance of aging with cosmetic surgery. Although many seniors report that their lives are more satisfying than ever, and their self-esteem is stronger than when they were young, they are still subject to cultural attitudes that make them feel invisible and devalued.

Gerontology is the study of aging. Gerontologists investigate age, aging, and the aged. They study what it is like to be an older adult and the ways that aging affects other members of his/her society. As a multidisciplinary field, gerontology includes the work of medical and biological scientists, social scientists, and even financial and economic scholars.

Social gerontology focuses on the sociological aspects of aging. Researchers focus on developing a broad understanding of the experiences of people at specific ages, changing (or disappearing) relationships with other people such as spouse and friends, and the process of dying. Social gerontologists work as social researchers, counselors, community organizers, and service providers for older adults. Because of their

specialization, social gerontologists are in a strong position to advocate for older adults.

Scholars in these disciplines have learned that “aging” reflects not only the physiological process of growing older but also our attitudes and beliefs about the aging process. You’ve likely seen online calculators that promise to determine your “real age” as opposed to your chronological age. These ads target the notion that people may “feel” a different age than their actual years. Some sixty-year-olds feel frail and elderly, while some eighty-year-olds feel sprightly.

Equally revealing is that as people grow older they define “old age” in terms of greater years than their current age (Logan 1992). Many people want to postpone old age and regard it as a phase that will never arrive. Some older adults even succumb to stereotyping their own age group (Rothbaum 1983).

In the United States, the experience of being elderly has changed greatly over the past century. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, many U.S. households were home to **multigenerational families** (those consisting of more than two generations), and the experiences and wisdom of elders was respected. They offered wisdom and support to their children and often helped raise their grandchildren (Sweetser 1984).

Multigenerational U.S. families began to decline after World War II, and their numbers reached a low point around 1980, but they are on the rise again. In fact, Pew Research Center analysis of census data found that multigenerational families in the United States have now reached a record high. In 2014, 60.6 million people, or 19% of the U.S. population, lived with multiple generations under one roof.

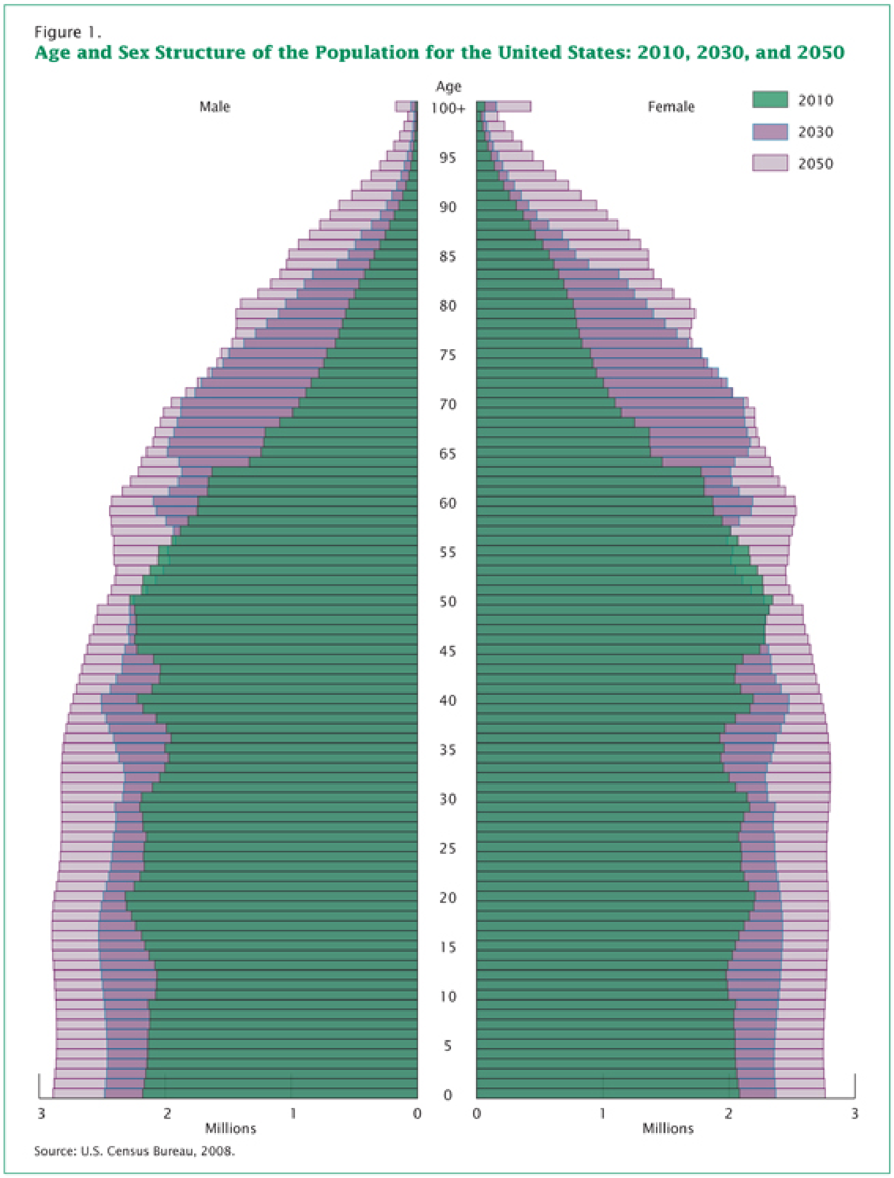
One of the major factors behind this trend is the new wave of immigration, predominant of Latinos and Asians, that began around 1970. Like their European counterparts from earlier centuries, these immigrants are far more inclined than native-born Americans to live in multi-generational family households. Another factor is the Great Recession that started in 2008. Since then, more than 20 million people, mostly young adults who got difficulty in paying the rent, have joined this style of multigenerational

families. The economic benefits of sharing services can be substantial: Grandparents and older family members can provide child care, while younger adults can care for elderly relatives (New York Times 2016).

Studying Aging Populations

How old is this woman? In modern U.S. society, appearance is not a reliable indicator of age. In addition to genetic differences, health habits, hair dyes, Botox, and the like make traditional signs of aging increasingly unreliable. (Photo courtesy of the Sean and Lauren Spectacular/flickr)

Since its creation in 1790, the U.S. Census Bureau has been tracking age in the population. Age is an important factor to analyze with accompanying demographic figures, such as income and health. The population pyramid below shows projected age distribution patterns for the next several decades.



This population pyramid shows the age distribution pattern for 2010 and projected patterns for 2030 and 2050 (Graph courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau).

Statisticians use data to calculate the **median** age of a population, that is, the number that marks the halfway point in a group's age range. In the United States, the median age is about forty (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

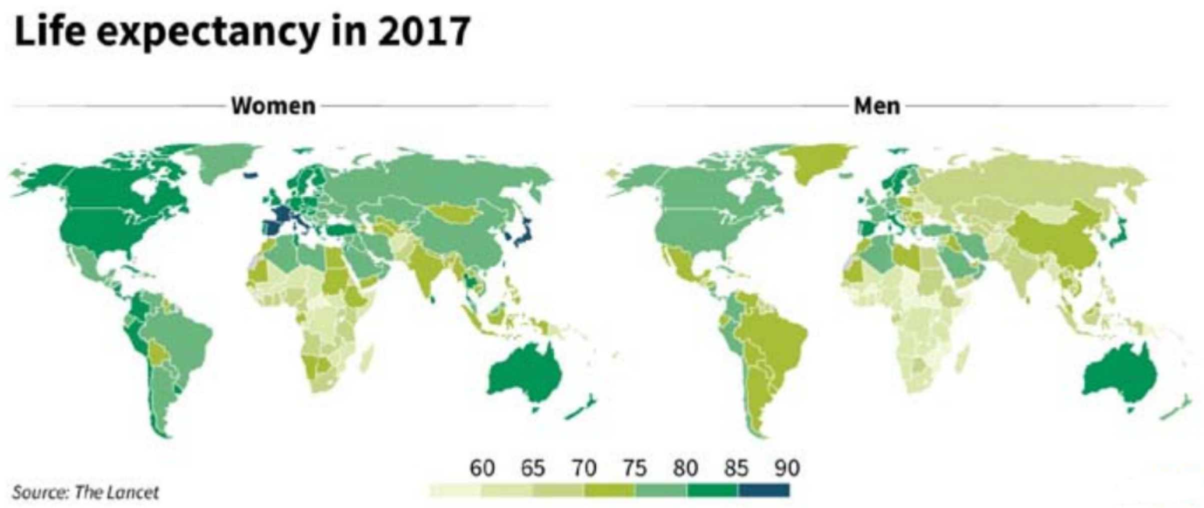
That means that about half of the people in the United States are under forty and about half are over forty. This median age has been increasing, which indicates the population as a whole is growing older.

A **cohort** is a group of people who share a statistical or demographic trait. People belonging to the same age cohort were born in the same time frame. (Or, students enrolled in the same semester belong to the same school cohort, which is convenient to calculate their graduation rates.) Understanding a population’s age composition can point to certain social and cultural factors and help governments and societies plan for future social and economic challenges.

Sociological studies on aging might help explain the difference between Native American age cohorts and the general population. While Native American societies have a strong tradition of revering their elders, they also have a lower life expectancy because of lack of access to healthcare and high levels of mercury in fish, which is a traditional part of their diet.

The Life Expectancy

The **life expectancy** can be understood as the average number of years a person born today may expect to live--or, conversely, as the average age at which people died in a given year. To be noted, though, it's not about biological "potential," but about the death rate whose causes include anything, such as natural disasters, sickness, traffic accidents, wars, and so on.



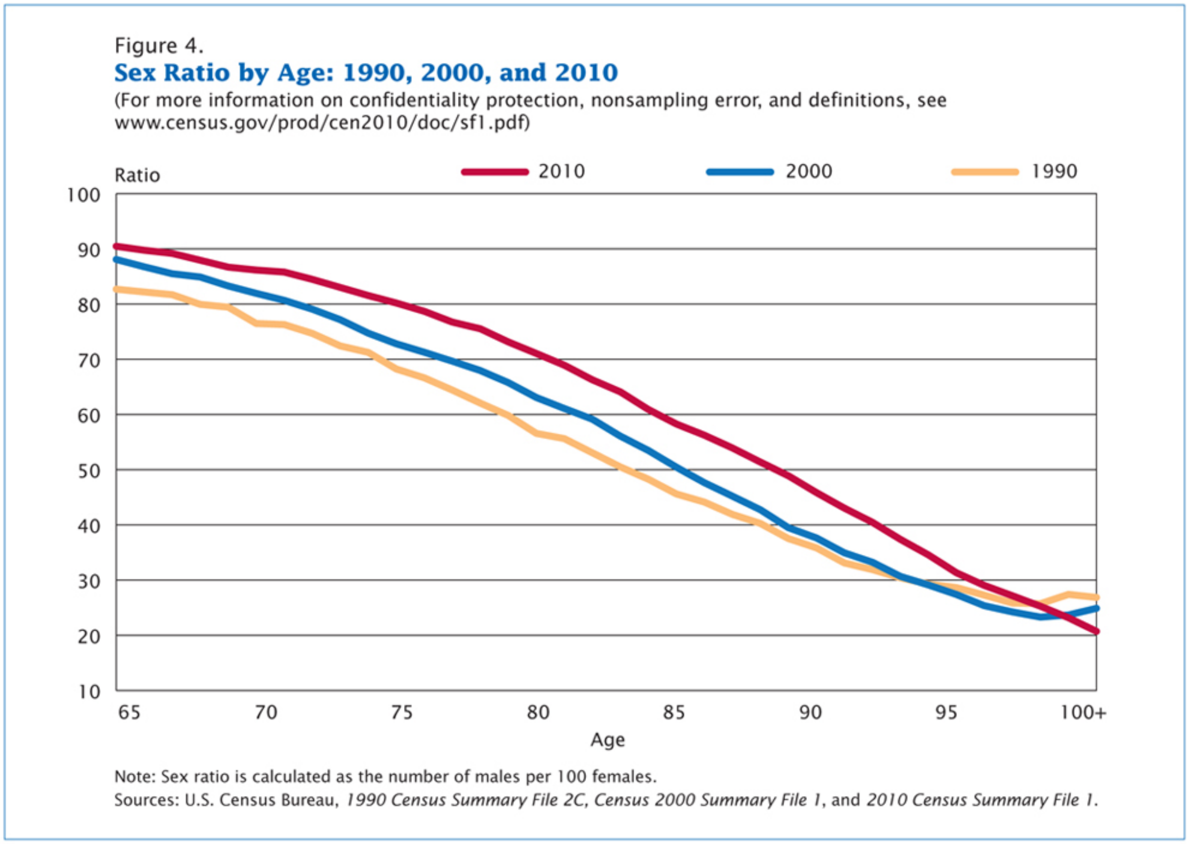
The life expectancy by country, by gender, in 2017. (Source: The Lancet)

There are several important tendencies in the life expectancy. First, as shown above, women live longer than men, universally. Second, it is related to the nation's wealth in a positive way; the richer the nation, the longer its people tend to live. Somewhat closely related to this, third, it is related to the nation's political condition (such as wars, crime rates, etc.) in a negative way; the more dangerous the nation, the shorter its people tend to live. Fourth, nevertheless, it has been increasing, globally.

Japan has the longest life expectancy in the world in 2015 (83.7 for both sexes combined), followed by Switzerland (83.4) and Singapore (83.1) (WHO 2016). The United States is the 31th (79.3). Sudan, one of the countries in which civil wars are going on, is the 174th (57.3).

[link] shows the detail for the difference between men and women in their life expectancy. In 2010, there were ninety sixty-five-year-old men per one hundred sixty-five-year-old women. However, there were only eighty seventy-five-year-old men per one hundred seventy-five-year-old women, and only sixty eighty-five-year-old men per one hundred eighty-five-year-old women. Nevertheless, as the graph shows, the sex ratio actually

increased over time, indicating that men are closing the gap between their life spans and those of women (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

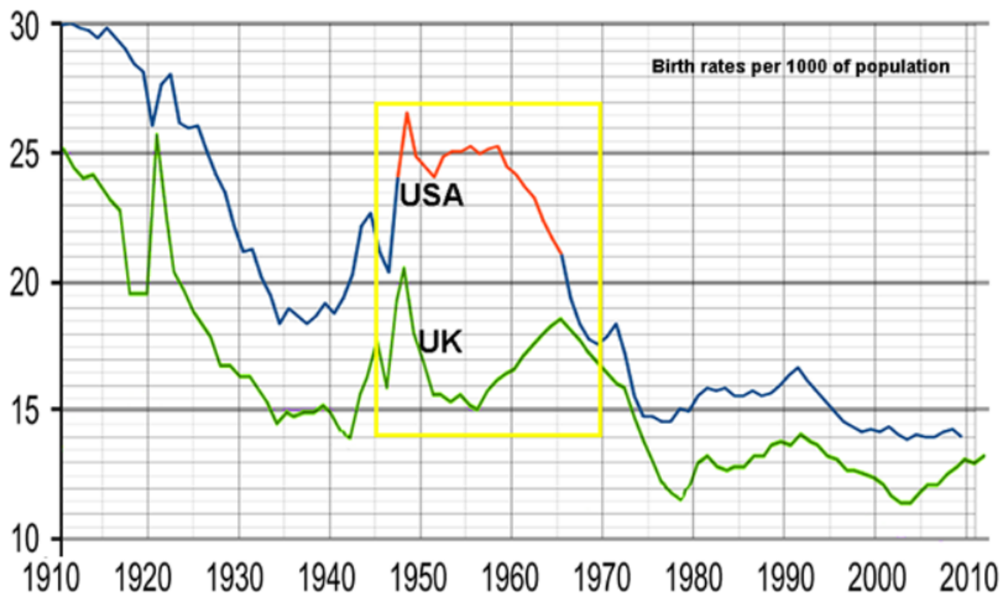


This U.S. Census graph shows that women live significantly longer than men. However, over the past two decades, men have narrowed the percentage by which women outlive them. (Graph courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau)

On the other hand, there is a term, the **life span**, the maximum length of life possible. While the life expectancy can be understood as, roughly saying, the mean average--although its formula is grotesquely complicated--the life span is the highest value (or the longest year) in a data set (or in the world population). In analogy, the average GPA can be, say, 2.15 (just like the life expectancy) while the highest value of the GPA in a school can be, say, 3.94

(the life span). As shown in the beginning of this chapter, a French woman lived for 122 years.

Baby Boomers



Birth rates in the USA and the UK from 1910 to 2010

Of particular interest to gerontologists today is the population of **baby boomers**, the cohort that started in 1946 (see above), now reaching their 60s and 70s. Coming of age in the 1960s and early 1970s, the baby boom generation was the first group of children and teenagers who grew up with TV with their own spending power and therefore their own marketing power (Macunovich 2000). But what caused this phenomenon seen not just in the U.S. or U.K., but also Germany, France, Japan, and many more countries?

As this group has aged, it has redefined what it means to be young, middle-aged, and now old. People in the boomer generation do not want to grow old the way their grandparents did; the result is a wide range of products designed to ward off the effects—or the signs—of aging. Previous generations of people over sixty-five were “old.” Baby boomers are in “later life” or “the third age” (Gilleard and Higgs 2007). In Italy, whose life expectancy is the 6th (82.7 for both sexes) in the world, age is only a

number, as citizens will now be considered 'elderly’ after 75 (Euronews 2018).

This aging of the baby-boom cohort, on the other hand, has serious implications for our society. Healthcare is one of the areas most impacted by this trend. The size of the baby-boom cohort is unprecedentedly big, their life expectancy is predicted to be unprecedentedly long, and the society's burden to support them is unprecedentedly big. This is the problem of aging on the nation's level, and is commonly shared among the first world countries, such as Japan, Italy, France, and so forth. Also, the third world countries, especially China and India, whose populations are enormously big, will soon face the problem.

A study from 2008 indicates that medical schools are not producing enough medical professionals who specialize in treating the elderly (Gerontological Society of America 2008). On the other hand, though, some other studies indicate that aging boomers will bring economic growth to the healthcare industries, particularly in areas like pharmaceutical manufacturing and home healthcare services (Bierman 2011). Furthermore, many of our medical advances of the past few decades are said to be a result of boomers’ health requirements. Unlike the elderly of previous generations, the boomers do not expect that turning sixty-five means their active lives are over. They are not willing to abandon work or leisure activities, but they may need more medical support to keep living vigorous lives. This desire of a large group of over-sixty-five-year-olds wanting to continue with a high activity level is driving innovation in the medical industry (Shaw). See? Societies are changing.

The economic impact of aging boomers is also an area of concern for many observers. Although the baby boom generation earned more than previous generations and enjoyed a higher standard of living, they also spent their money lavishly and did not adequately prepare for retirement. According to a 2008 report from the McKinsey Global Institute, approximately two-thirds of early boomer households have not accumulated enough savings to maintain their lifestyles. This will have a ripple effect on the economy as boomers work and spend less (Farrel et al. 2008).

Just as some observers are concerned about the possibility of Medicare being overburdened, Social Security is considered to be at risk. Social Security is a government-run retirement program funded primarily through payroll taxes. With enough people paying into the program, there should be enough money for retirees to take out. But with the aging boomer cohort starting to receive Social Security benefits and fewer workers paying into the Social Security trust fund, economists warn that the system will collapse by the year 2037. A similar warning came in the 1980s; in response to recommendations from the Greenspan Commission, the retirement age (the age at which people could start receiving Social Security benefits) was raised from sixty-two to sixty-seven and the payroll tax was increased. A similar hike in retirement age, perhaps to seventy, is a possible solution to the current threat to Social Security (Reuteman 2010).

Aging around the World

Cultural values and attitudes can shape people's experience of aging. (Photo courtesy of flickr)

From 1950 to approximately 2010, the global population of individuals age 65 and older increased by a range of 5–7% (Lee 2009). This percentage is expected to increase and will have a huge impact on the **dependency ratio**: the number of nonproductive citizens (those who need to be supported) to that of productive working citizens (those who support) (Bartram and Roe 2005). As the ratio is increasing, the burden for those who support is increasing. If this continues, which seems to be clearly the case, the burden will become unbearable. This is one of the major aging issues.

As healthcare improves and life expectancy increases across the world, elder care will be an emerging issue. Wienclaw (2009) suggests that with fewer working-age citizens available to provide home care and long-term assisted care to the elderly, the costs of elder care will increase.

Worldwide, the expectation governing the amount and type of elder care varies from culture to culture. For example, in Asia the responsibility for elder care lies firmly on the family (Yap, Thang, and Traphagan 2005). This is different from the approach in most Western countries, where the elderly are considered independent and are expected to tend to their own care. It is not uncommon for family members to intervene only if the elderly relative requires assistance, often due to poor health. Even then, caring for the elderly is considered voluntary. In the United States, decisions to care for an elderly relative are often conditionally based on the promise of future returns, such as inheritance or, in some cases, the amount of support the elderly provided to the caregiver in the past (Hashimoto 1996).

In the United States, by contrast, many people view caring for the elderly as a burden. Even when there is a family member able and willing to provide for an elderly family member, 60 percent of family caregivers are employed outside the home and are unable to provide the needed support. At the same time, however, many middle-class families are unable to bear the financial burden of “outsourcing” professional healthcare, resulting in gaps in care (Bookman and Kimbrel 2011). It is important to note that even within the United States not all demographic groups treat aging the same way. While most people in the United States are reluctant to place their elderly members into out-of-home assisted care, demographically speaking, the groups least likely to do so are Latinos, African Americans, and Asians (Bookman and Kimbrel 2011).

Globally, the United States and other core nations are fairly well equipped to handle the demands of an exponentially increasing elderly population. However, peripheral and semi-peripheral nations face similar increases without comparable resources. Poverty among elders is a concern, especially among elderly women. The feminization of the aging poor, evident in peripheral nations, is directly due to the number of elderly

women in those countries who are single, illiterate, and not a part of the labor force (Mujahid 2006).

In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Aging was held in Madrid, Spain, resulting in the Madrid Plan, an internationally coordinated effort to create comprehensive social policies to address the needs of the worldwide aging population. The plan identifies three themes to guide international policy on aging: 1) publically acknowledging the global challenges caused by, and the global opportunities created by, a rising global population; 2) empowering the elderly; and 3) linking international policies on aging to international policies on development (Zelenev 2008).

The Madrid Plan has not yet been successful in achieving all its aims. However, it has increased awareness of the various issues associated with a global aging population, as well as raising the international consciousness to the way that the factors influencing the vulnerability of the elderly (social exclusion, prejudice and discrimination, and a lack of socio-legal protection) overlap with other developmental issues (basic human rights, empowerment, and participation), leading to an increase in legal protections (Zelenev 2008).

There was a cultural custom known as **geronticide** or senicide, the abandonment to death, suicide, or killing of the elderly. Many societies in the world practiced it. The custom was not personal but cultural, and the members had to follow it, regardless. The basic idea for this custom can be seen in this question: "Should a society devote substantial resources to caring for the unproductive elderly?" (Schotland 2013)

In Japan, the most rapidly aging country in the world, the caregiving burden on families has become psychologically too much for many to bear (Japan Times 2016). In the past six years there have been 138 murders or attempted murders of elderly people by their relatives, murders which are personal, not institutional or cultural. Right now, more than 5.5 million seniors are being cared for by their families.

Some medical institutions have developed a manual for when and how to stop "life care for people with life-limiting conditions" (National Institute for Health and care Excellence), which is institutional, not personal or

cultural. Senator John McCain, diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumor, for example, decided to cease treatment and died this way.

Today, assisted dying is the focus of intense legal battles and controversies. Assisted dying refers to both voluntary active euthanasia and physician-assisted death. So far, three countries approve of assisted dying: Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (Euronews 2019). Some other countries (i.e., Spain, Sweden, England, Italy, Hungary, and Norway, so far) allow passive euthanasia under strict circumstances, under which, e.g., a patient suffers from an incurable disease and decides not to apply life-prolonging treatments.

Summary

The social study of aging uses population data and cohorts to predict social concerns related to aging populations. In the United States, the population is increasingly older (called "the graying of the United States"), especially due to the baby boomer segment. Global studies on aging reveal a difference in life expectancy between core and peripheral nations as well as a discrepancy in nations' preparedness for the challenges of increasing elderly populations.

Further Research

Gregory Bator founded the television show *Graceful Aging* and then developed a web site offering short video clips from the show. The purpose of *Graceful Aging* is to both inform and entertain, with clips on topics such as sleep, driving, health, safety, and legal issues. Bator, a lawyer, works on counseling seniors about their legal needs. Log onto *Graceful Aging* for a visual understanding of aging: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/graceful_aging

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Glossary

baby boomers
: people in the United States born between approximately 1946 and 1964

centenarians
: people 100 years old or older

cohort
: a group of people who share a statistical or demographic trait

dependency ratio
: the number of nonproductive citizens (young, disabled, elderly) to productive working citizens

filial piety
: deference and respect to one’s parents and ancestors in all things

gerontology
: a field of science that seeks to understand the process of aging and the challenges encountered as seniors grow older

life expectancy
: the number of years a newborn is expected to live

social gerontology
: a specialized field of gerontology that examines the social (and sociological) aspects of aging

The Process of Aging

- Consider the biological, social, and psychological changes in aging
- Describe the birth of the field of geriatrics
- Examine attitudes toward death and dying and how they affect the elderly
- Name the five stages of grief developed by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

As human beings grow older, they go through different phases or stages of life. It is helpful to understand aging in the context of these phases. A **life course** is the period from birth to death, including a sequence of predictable life events. Each stage comes with different responsibilities and expectations, which of course vary by individual and culture. Uniformly, however, whether one steps over each stage happily or miserably depends solely on one's relationships with others. German-born American psychologist Erik Erikson, the pioneer theorist of the life-course study, suggests that there are 8 stages in life course, each of which needs to be supported by particular other(s), as shown below (1968):

The Eight Stages in Life Course

1. Infant -- mother.
2. Toddler -- parents.
3. Preschooler -- family.
4. School-age child -- neighborhood and school.
5. Adolescence -- peer groups, role models.
6. Young adult -- partners, friends.
7. Middle adult -- household, workmates.
8. Old adult -- mankind or “my kind,” looking back one's self

As Riley (1978) notes, aging is a lifelong process and entails maturation and change on physical, psychological, and social levels. Age, much like race, class, and gender, is a hierarchy in which some categories are more highly valued than others. For example, while many children look forward to gaining independence, Packer and Chasteen (2006) suggest that even in children, age prejudice leads to a negative view of aging. This, in turn, can lead to a widespread segregation between the old and the young at the institutional, societal, and cultural levels (Hagestad and Uhlenberg 2006).

Biological Changes

Aging can be a visible, public experience. Many people recognize the signs of aging and, because of the meanings that culture assigns to these changes, believe that being older means being in physical decline. Many older people, however, remain healthy, active, and happy. (Photo courtesy of Pedro Riberio Simoes/flickr)

Each person experiences age-related changes based on many factors. Biological factors such as molecular and cellular changes are called

primary aging, while aging that occurs due to controllable factors such as lack of physical exercise and poor diet is called **secondary aging** (Whitbourne and Whitbourne 2010).

Most people begin to see signs of aging after fifty years old, when they notice the physical markers of age. Skin becomes thinner, drier, and less elastic. Wrinkles form. Hair begins to thin and gray. Men prone to balding start losing hair. The difficulty or relative ease with which people adapt to these changes is dependent in part on the meaning given to aging by their particular culture. A culture that values youthfulness and beauty above all else leads to a negative perception of growing old. Conversely, a culture that reveres the elderly for their life experience and wisdom contributes to a more positive perception of what it means to grow old.

The effects of aging can feel daunting, and sometimes the fear of physical changes (like declining energy, food sensitivity, and loss of hearing and vision) is more challenging to deal with than the changes themselves. The way people perceive physical aging is largely dependent on how they were socialized. If people can accept the changes in their bodies as a natural process of aging, the changes will not seem as frightening.

According to the federal Administration on Aging (2011), in 2009 fewer people over sixty-five years old assessed their health as “excellent” or “very good” (41.6 percent) compared to those aged eighteen to sixty-four (64.4 percent). Evaluating data from the National Center for Health Statistics and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Administration on Aging found that from 2006 to 2008, the most frequently reported health issues for those over sixty-five years old included arthritis (50 percent), hypertension (38 percent), heart disease (32 percent), and cancer (22 percent). About 27 percent of people age sixty and older are considered obese by current medical standards. Parker and Thorslund (2006) found that while the trend is toward steady improvement in most disability measures, there is a concomitant increase in functional impairments (disability) and chronic diseases. At the same time, medical advances have reduced some of the disabling effects of those diseases (Crimmins 2004).

Some impacts of aging are gender-specific. Some of the disadvantages aging women face arise from long-standing social gender roles. For

example, Social Security favors men over women, inasmuch as women do not earn Social Security benefits for the unpaid labor they perform (usually at home) as an extension of their gender roles. In the healthcare field, elderly female patients are more likely than elderly men to see their healthcare concerns trivialized (Sharp 1995) and are more likely to have their health issues labeled psychosomatic (Munch 2004). Another female-specific aspect of aging is that mass-media outlets often depict elderly females in terms of negative stereotypes and as less successful than older men (Bazzini and Mclntosh I997).

For men, the process of aging—and society's response to and support of the experience—may be quite different. The gradual decrease in male sexual performance that occurs as a result of primary aging is medicalized and constructed as needing treatment (Marshall and Katz 2002) so that a man may maintain a sense of youthful masculinity. On the other hand, aging men have fewer opportunities to assert their masculine identities in the company of other men (for example, through sports participation) (Drummond 1998). And some social scientists have observed that the aging male body is depicted in the Western world as genderless (Spector-Mersel 2006).

Aging is accompanied by a host of biological, social, and psychological changes. (Photo courtesy of Michael Cohen/flickr)

Social and Psychological Changes

Male or female, growing older means confronting the psychological issues that come with entering the last phase of life. Young people moving into adulthood take on new roles and responsibilities as their lives expand, but an opposite arc can be observed in old age. What are the hallmarks of social and psychological change?

Retirement—the withdrawal from paid work at a certain age—is a relatively recent idea. Up until the late nineteenth century, people worked about sixty hours a week until they were physically incapable of continuing.

Following the American Civil War, veterans receiving pensions were able to withdraw from the workforce, and the number of working older men began declining. A second large decline in the number of working men began in the post-World War II era, probably due to the availability of Social Security, and a third large decline in the 1960s and 1970s was probably due to the social support offered by Medicare and the increase in Social Security benefits (Munnell 2011).

In the twenty-first century, most people hope that at some point they will be able to stop working and enjoy the fruits of their labor. But do we look forward to this time or fear it? When people retire from familiar work routines, some easily seek new hobbies, interests, and forms of recreation. Many find new groups and explore new activities, but others may find it more difficult to adapt to new routines and loss of social roles, losing their sense of self-worth in the process.

Each phase of life has challenges that come with the potential for fear. Erik H. Erikson (1902–1994), in his view of socialization, broke the typical life span into eight phases. Each phase presents a particular challenge that must be overcome. In the final stage, old age, the challenge is to embrace integrity over despair. Some people are unable to successfully overcome the challenge. They may have to confront regrets, such as being disappointed in their children's lives or perhaps their own. They may have to accept that they will never reach certain career goals. Or they must come to terms with what their career success has cost them, such as time with their family or declining personal health. Others, however, are able to achieve a strong sense of integrity and are able to embrace the new phase in life. When that happens, there is tremendous potential for creativity. They can learn new skills, practice new activities, and peacefully prepare for the end of life.

For some, overcoming despair might entail remarriage after the death of a spouse. A study conducted by Kate Davidson (2002) reviewed demographic data that asserted men were more likely to remarry after the death of a spouse and suggested that widows (the surviving female spouse of a deceased male partner) and widowers (the surviving male spouse of a deceased female partner) experience their postmarital lives differently. Many surviving women enjoyed a new sense of freedom, since they were

living alone for the first time. On the other hand, for surviving men, there was a greater sense of having lost something, because they were now deprived of a constant source of care as well as the focus of their emotional life.

Aging and Sexuality

In *Harold and Maude*, a 1971 cult classic movie, a twenty-something young man falls in love with a seventy-nine-year-old woman. The world reacts in disgust. What is your response to this picture, given that that the two people are meant to be lovers, not grandmother and grandson? (Photo courtesy of luckyjackson/flickr)

It is no secret that people in the United States are squeamish about the subject of sex. And when the subject is the sexuality of elderly people? No one wants to think about it or even talk about it. That fact is part of what makes 1971's *Harold and Maude* so provocative. In this cult favorite film, Harold, an alienated young man, meets and falls in love with Maude, a

seventy-nine-year-old woman. What is so telling about the film is the reaction of his family, priest, and psychologist, who exhibit disgust and horror at such a match.

Although it is difficult to have an open, public national dialogue about aging and sexuality, the reality is that our sexual selves do not disappear after age sixty-five. People continue to enjoy sex—and not always safe sex—well into their later years. In fact, some research suggests that as many as one in five new cases of AIDS occurs in adults over sixty-five years old (Hillman 2011).

In some ways, old age may be a time to enjoy sex more, not less. For women, the elder years can bring a sense of relief as the fear of an unwanted pregnancy is removed and the children are grown and taking care of themselves. However, while we have expanded the number of psycho-pharmaceuticals to address sexual dysfunction in men, it was not until very recently that the medical field acknowledged the existence of female sexual dysfunctions (Bryant 2004).

Death and Dying

A young man sits at the grave of his great-grandmother.

(Photo courtesy of Sara Goldsmith/flickr)

For most of human history, the standard of living was significantly lower than it is now. Humans struggled to survive with few amenities and very limited medical technology. The risk of death due to disease or accident was high in any life stage, and life expectancy was low. As people began to live longer, death became associated with old age.

For many teenagers and young adults, losing a grandparent or another older relative can be the first loss of a loved one they experience. It may be their first encounter with **grief**, a psychological, emotional, and social response to the feelings of loss that accompanies death or a similar event.

People tend to perceive death, their own and that of others, based on the values of their culture. While some may look upon death as the natural conclusion to a long, fruitful life, others may find the prospect of dying frightening to contemplate. People tend to have strong resistance to the idea of their own death, and strong emotional reactions of loss to the death of loved ones. Viewing death as a loss, as opposed to a natural or tranquil transition, is often considered normal in the United States.

What may be surprising is how few studies were conducted on death and dying prior to the 1960s. Death and dying were fields that had received little attention until a psychologist named Elisabeth Kübler-Ross began observing people who were in the process of dying. As Kübler-Ross witnessed people’s transition toward death, she found some common threads in their experiences. She observed that the process had five distinct stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. She published her findings in a 1969 book called *On Death and Dying*. The book remains a classic on the topic today.

Kübler-Ross found that a person’s first reaction to the prospect of dying is *denial*: this is characterized by the person's not wanting to believe he or she is dying, with common thoughts such as “I feel fine” or “This is not really happening to me.” The second stage is *anger*, when loss of life is seen as unfair and unjust. A person then resorts to the third stage, *bargaining*:

trying to negotiate with a higher power to postpone the inevitable by reforming or changing the way he or she lives. The fourth stage, psychological *depression*, allows for resignation as the situation begins to seem hopeless. In the final stage, a person adjusts to the idea of death and reaches *acceptance*. At this point, the person can face death honestly, by regarding it as a natural and inevitable part of life and can make the most of their remaining time.

The work of Kübler-Ross was eye-opening when it was introduced. It broke new ground and opened the doors for sociologists, social workers, health practitioners, and therapists to study death and help those who were facing death. Kübler-Ross's work is generally considered a major contribution to **thanatology**: the systematic study of death and dying.

Of special interests to thanatologists is the concept of "dying with dignity." Modern medicine includes advanced medical technology that may prolong life without a parallel improvement to the quality of life one may have. In some cases, people may not want to continue living when they are in constant pain and no longer enjoying life. Should patients have the right to choose to die with dignity? Dr. Jack Kevorkian was a staunch advocate for **physician-assisted suicide**: the voluntary or physician-assisted use of lethal medication provided by a medical doctor to end one's life. This right to have a doctor help a patient die with dignity is controversial. In the United States, Oregon was the first state to pass a law allowing physician-assisted suicides. In 1997, Oregon instituted the Death with Dignity Act, which required the presence of two physicians for a legal assisted suicide. This law was successfully challenged by U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft in 2001, but the appeals process ultimately upheld the Oregon law. Subsequently, both Montana and Washington have passed similar laws.

The controversy surrounding death with dignity laws is emblematic of the way our society tries to separate itself from death. Health institutions have built facilities to comfortably house those who are terminally ill. This is seen as a compassionate act, helping relieve the surviving family members of the burden of caring for the dying relative. But studies almost universally show that people prefer to die in their own homes (Lloyd, White, and Sutton 2011). Is it our social responsibility to care for elderly relatives up

until their death? How do we balance the responsibility for caring for an elderly relative with our other responsibilities and obligations? As our society grows older, and as new medical technology can prolong life even further, the answers to these questions will develop and change.

The changing concept of **hospice** is an indicator of our society's changing view of death. Hospice is a type of healthcare that treats terminally ill people when "cure-oriented treatments" are no longer an option (Hospice Foundation of America 2012b). Hospice doctors, nurses, and therapists receive special training in the care of the dying. The focus is not on getting better or curing the illness, but on passing out of this life in comfort and peace. Hospice centers exist as a place where people can go to die in comfort, and increasingly, hospice services encourage at-home care so that someone has the comfort of dying in a familiar environment, surrounded by family (Hospice Foundation of America 2012a). While many of us would probably prefer to avoid thinking of the end of our lives, it may be possible to take comfort in the idea that when we do approach death in a hospice setting, it is in a familiar, relatively controlled place.

Summary

Old age affects every aspect of human life: biological, social, and psychological. Although medical technology has lengthened life expectancies, it cannot eradicate aging and death. Cultural attitudes shape the way our society views old age and dying, but these attitudes shift and evolve over time.

Further Research

Read the article "A Study of Sexuality and Health among Older Adults in the United States." You will find it online at the *New England Journal of Medicine*: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/New_England_journal_medicine

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Glossary

geriatrics
: a medical specialty focusing on the elderly

grief
: a psychological, emotional, and social response to the feelings of loss that accompanies death or a similar event

hospice
: healthcare that treats terminally ill people by providing comfort during the dying process

life course
: the period from birth to death, including a sequence of predictable life events

physician-assisted suicide
: the voluntary use of lethal medication provided by a medical doctor to end one’s life

primary aging
: biological factors such as molecular and cellular changes

secondary aging
: aging that occurs due to controllable factors like exercise and diet

thanatology
: the systematic study of death and dying

Challenges Facing the Elderly

- Understand the historical and current trends of poverty among elderly populations
- Recognize ageist thinking and ageist attitudes in individuals and institutions
- Learn about elderly individuals’ risks of being mistreated and abused

Aging comes with many challenges. The loss of independence is one potential part of the process, as are diminished physical ability and age discrimination. The term **senescence** refers to the aging process, including biological, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual changes. This section discusses some of the challenges we encounter during this process.

As already observed, many older adults remain highly self-sufficient. Others require more care. Because the elderly typically no longer hold jobs, finances can be a challenge. And due to cultural misconceptions, older people can be targets of ridicule and stereotypes. The elderly face many challenges in later life, but they do not have to enter old age without dignity.

Poverty

While elderly poverty rates showed an improvement trend for decades, the 2008 recession has changed some older people's financial futures. Some who had planned a leisurely retirement have found themselves at risk of late-age destitution. (Photo (a) courtesy of Michael Cohen/flickr; photo (b) courtesy of Alex Proimos/flickr)

For many people in the United States, growing older once meant living with less income. In 1960, almost 35 percent of the elderly existed on poverty-level incomes. A generation ago, the nation's oldest populations had the highest risk of living in poverty.

At the start of the twenty-first century, the older population was putting an end to that trend. Among people over sixty-five years old, the poverty rate fell from 30 percent in 1967 to 9.7 percent in 2008, well below the national average of 13.2 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). However, given the subsequent recession, which severely reduced the retirement savings of many while taxing public support systems, how are the elderly affected? According to the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, the national poverty rate among the elderly had risen to 14 percent by 2010 (Urban Institute and Kaiser Commission 2010).

Before the recession hit, what had changed to cause a reduction in poverty among the elderly? What social patterns contributed to the shift? For several decades, a greater number of women joined the workforce. More married couples earned double incomes during their working years and saved more money for their retirement. Private employers and governments began offering better retirement programs. By 1990, senior citizens reported earning 36 percent more income on average than they did in 1980; that was five times the rate of increase for people under age thirty-five (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).

In addition, many people were gaining access to better healthcare. New trends encouraged people to live more healthful lifestyles by placing an emphasis on exercise and nutrition. There was also greater access to information about the health risks of behaviors such as cigarette smoking,

alcohol consumption, and drug use. Because they were healthier, many older people continue to work past the typical retirement age and provide more opportunity to save for retirement. Will these patterns return once the recession ends? Sociologists will be watching to see. In the meantime, they are realizing the immediate impact of the recession on elderly poverty.

During the recession, older people lost some of the financial advantages that they'd gained in the 1980s and 1990s. From October 2007 to October 2009 the values of retirement accounts for people over age fifty lost 18 percent of their value. The sharp decline in the stock market also forced many to delay their retirement (Administration on Aging 2009).

Ageism

Are these street signs humorous or offensive? What shared assumptions make them humorous? Or is memory loss too serious to be made fun of? (Photo courtesy of Tumbleweed/flickr)

Driving to the grocery store, Peter, twenty-three years old, got stuck behind a car on a four-lane main artery through his city's business district. The speed limit was thirty-five miles per hour, and while most drivers sped along at forty to forty-five mph, the driver in front of him was going the minimum speed. Peter tapped on his horn. He tailgated the driver. Finally, Peter had a chance to pass the car. He glanced over. Sure enough, Peter thought, a gray-haired old man guilty of "DWE," driving while elderly.

At the grocery store, Peter waited in the checkout line behind an older woman. She paid for her groceries, lifted her bags of food into her cart, and toddled toward the exit. Peter, guessing her to be about eighty years old, was reminded of his grandmother. He paid for his groceries and caught up with her.

"Can I help you with your cart?" he asked.

"No, thank you. I can get it myself," she said and marched off toward her car.

Peter's responses to both older people, the driver and the shopper, were prejudiced. In both cases, he made unfair assumptions. He assumed the driver drove cautiously simply because the man was a senior citizen, and he assumed the shopper needed help carrying her groceries just because she was an older woman.

Responses like Peter's toward older people are fairly common. He didn't intend to treat people differently based on personal or cultural biases, but he did. **Ageism** is discrimination (when someone acts on a prejudice) based on age. Dr. Robert Butler coined the term in 1968, noting that ageism exists in all cultures (Brownell). Ageist attitudes and biases based on stereotypes reduce elderly people to inferior or limited positions.

Ageism can vary in severity. Peter's attitudes are probably seen as fairly mild, but relating to the elderly in ways that are patronizing can be offensive. When ageism is reflected in the workplace, in healthcare, and in assisted-living facilities, the effects of discrimination can be more severe.

Ageism can make older people fear losing a job, feel dismissed by a doctor, or feel a lack of power and control in their daily living situations.

In early societies, the elderly were respected and revered. Many preindustrial societies observed **gerontocracy**, a type of social structure wherein the power is held by a society's oldest members. In some countries today, the elderly still have influence and power and their vast knowledge is respected. Reverence for the elderly is still a part of some cultures, but it has changed in many places because of social factors.

In many modern nations, however, industrialization contributed to the diminished social standing of the elderly. Today wealth, power, and prestige are also held by those in younger age brackets. The average age of corporate executives was fifty-nine years old in 1980. In 2008, the average age had lowered to fifty-four years old (Stuart 2008). Some older members of the workforce felt threatened by this trend and grew concerned that younger employees in higher level positions would push them out of the job market. Rapid advancements in technology and media have required new skill sets that older members of the workforce are less likely to have.

Changes happened not only in the workplace but also at home. In agrarian societies, a married couple cared for their aging parents. The oldest members of the family contributed to the household by doing chores, cooking, and helping with child care. As economies shifted from agrarian to industrial, younger generations moved to cities to work in factories. The elderly began to be seen as an expensive burden. They did not have the strength and stamina to work outside the home. What began during industrialization, a trend toward older people living apart from their grown children, has become commonplace.

Mistreatment and Abuse

Mistreatment and abuse of the elderly is a major social problem. As expected, with the biology of aging, the elderly sometimes become physically frail. This frailty renders them dependent on others for care—sometimes for small needs like household tasks, and sometimes for assistance with basic functions like eating and toileting. Unlike a child, who

also is dependent on another for care, an elder is an adult with a lifetime of experience, knowledge, and opinions—a more fully developed person. This makes the care-providing situation more complex.

Elder abuse occurs when a caretaker intentionally deprives an older person of care or harms the person in his or her charge. Caregivers may be family members, relatives, friends, health professionals, or employees of senior housing or nursing care. The elderly may be subject to many different types of abuse.

In a 2009 study on the topic led by Dr. Ron Acierno, the team of researchers identified five major categories of elder abuse: 1) physical abuse, such as hitting or shaking, 2) sexual abuse, including rape and coerced nudity, 3) psychological or emotional abuse, such as verbal harassment or humiliation, 4) neglect or failure to provide adequate care, and 5) financial abuse or exploitation (Acierno 2010).

The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA), a division of the U.S. Administration on Aging, also identifies abandonment and self-neglect as types of abuse. [link] shows some of the signs and symptoms that the NCEA encourages people to notice.

Type of Abuse	**Signs and Symptoms**
Physical abuse	Bruises, untreated wounds, sprains, broken glasses, lab findings of medication overdosage
Sexual abuse	Bruises around breasts or genitals, torn or bloody underclothing, unexplained venereal disease

Type of Abuse	Signs and Symptoms
Emotional/psychological abuse	Being upset or withdrawn, unusual dementia-like behavior (rocking, sucking)
Neglect	Poor hygiene, untreated bed sores, dehydration, soiled bedding
Financial	Sudden changes in banking practices, inclusion of additional names on bank cards, abrupt changes to will
Self-neglect	Untreated medical conditions, unclean living area, lack of medical items like dentures or glasses

Signs of Elder AbuseThe National Center on Elder Abuse encourages people to watch for these signs of mistreatment. (Chart courtesy of National Center on Elder Abuse)

How prevalent is elder abuse? Two recent U.S. studies found that roughly one in ten elderly people surveyed had suffered at least one form of elder abuse. Some social researchers believe elder abuse is underreported and that the number may be higher. The risk of abuse also increases in people with health issues such as dementia (Kohn and Verhoek-Oftedahl 2011). Older women were found to be victims of verbal abuse more often than their male counterparts.

In Acierno's study, which included a sample of 5,777 respondents age sixty and older, 5.2 percent of respondents reported financial abuse, 5.1 percent said they'd been neglected, and 4.6 endured emotional abuse (Acierno 2010). The prevalence of physical and sexual abuse was lower at 1.6 and 0.6 percent, respectively (Acierno 2010).

Other studies have focused on the caregivers to the elderly in an attempt to discover the causes of elder abuse. Researchers identified factors that

increased the likelihood of caregivers perpetrating abuse against those in their care. Those factors include inexperience, having other demands such as jobs (for those who weren't professionally employed as caregivers), caring for children, living full-time with the dependent elder, and experiencing high stress, isolation, and lack of support (Kohn and Verhoek-Oftedahl 2011).

A history of depression in the caregiver was also found to increase the likelihood of elder abuse. Neglect was more likely when care was provided by paid caregivers. Many of the caregivers who physically abused elders were themselves abused—in many cases, when they were children. Family members with some sort of dependency on the elder in their care were more likely to physically abuse that elder. For example, an adult child caring for an elderly parent while at the same time depending on some form of income from that parent, is considered more likely to perpetrate physical abuse (Kohn and Verhoek-Oftedahl 2011).

A survey in Florida found that 60.1 percent of caregivers reported verbal aggression as a style of conflict resolution. Paid caregivers in nursing homes were at a high risk of becoming abusive if they had low job satisfaction, treated the elderly like children, or felt burnt out (Kohn and Verhoek-Oftedahl 2011). Caregivers who tended to be verbally abusive were found to have had less training, lower education, and higher likelihood of depression or other psychiatric disorders. Based on the results of these studies, many housing facilities for seniors have increased their screening procedures for caregiver applicants.

Note:
World War II Veterans

World War II (1941–1945) veterans and members of an Honor Flight from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, visit the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC. Most of these men and women were in their late teens or twenties when they served. (Photo courtesy of Sean Hackbarth/flickr)

World War II veterans are aging. Many are in their eighties and nineties. They are dying at an estimated rate of about 740 per day, according to the U.S. Veterans Administration (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics 2011). Data suggest that by 2036, there will be no living veterans of WWII (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs).

When these veterans came home from the war and ended their service, little was known about posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These heroes did not receive the mental and physical healthcare that could have helped them. As a result, many of them, now in old age, are dealing with the effects of PTSD. Research suggests a high percentage of World War II veterans are plagued by flashback memories and isolation, and that many "self-medicate" with alcohol.

Research has found that veterans of any conflict are more than twice as likely as nonveterans to commit suicide, with rates highest among the oldest veterans. Reports show that WWII-era veterans are four times as

likely to take their own lives as people of the same age with no military service (Glantz 2010).

In May 2004, the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC, was completed and dedicated to honor those who served during the conflict. Dr. Earl Morse, a physician and retired Air Force captain, treated many WWII veterans. He encouraged them to visit the memorial, knowing it could help them heal. Many WWII veterans expressed interest in seeing the memorial. Unfortunately, many were in their eighties and were neither physically nor financially able to travel on their own. Dr. Morse arranged to personally escort some of the veterans and enlisted volunteer pilots who would pay for the flights themselves. He also raised money, insisting the veterans pay nothing. By the end of 2005, 137 veterans, many in wheelchairs, had made the trip. The Honor Flight Network was up and running.

As of 2010, the Honor Flight Network had flown more than 120,000 U.S. veterans of World War II, and some veterans of the Korean War, to Washington. The round-trip flights leave for day-long trips from airports in thirty states, staffed by volunteers who care for the needs of the elderly travelers (Honor Flight Network 2011).

Summary

As people enter old age, they face challenges. Ageism, which involves stereotyping and discrimination against the elderly, leads to misconceptions about their abilities. Although elderly poverty has been improving for decades, many older people may be detrimentally affected by the 2008 recession. Some elderly people grow physically frail and, therefore, dependent on caregivers, which increases their risk of elder abuse.

Further Research

Veterans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during various conflicts represent cohorts. Veterans share certain aspects of life in common. To find information on veteran populations and how they are aging, study the

information on the web site of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Dep_Veterans_Affairs

Learn more about the Honor Flight Network, the organization offering trips to national war memorials in Washington, DC, at no cost to the veterans: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/honor_flight

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Glossary

ageism
: discrimination based on age

elder abuse
: the act of a caretaker intentionally depriving an older person of care or harming the person in their charge

gerontocracy
: a type of social structure wherein the power is held by a society’s oldest members

senescence

the aging process, including biological, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual changes

Theoretical Perspectives on Aging

- Compare and contrast sociological theoretical perspectives on aging

How do you relate to and interact with older people? What roles do they play in your life? What role do they play in neighborhoods and communities, in cities and in states? Sociologists are interested in exploring the answers to such questions through three different perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalism

Functionalists analyze how the parts of society work together. Functionalists gauge how society's parts are working together to keep society running smoothly. How does this perspective address aging? The elderly, as a group, are one of society's vital parts.

Functionalists find that people with better resources who stay active in other roles adjust better to old age (Crosnoe and Elder 2002). Three social theories within the functional perspective were developed to explain how older people might deal with later-life experiences.

Does being old mean disengaging from the world? (Photo courtesy of Candida

Performa/Wikimedia
Commons)

The earliest gerontological theory in the functionalist perspective is **disengagement theory**, which suggests that withdrawing from society and social relationships is a natural part of growing old. There are several main points to the theory. First, because everyone expects to die one day, and because we experience physical and mental decline as we approach death, it is natural to withdraw from individuals and society. Second, as the elderly withdraw, they receive less reinforcement to conform to social norms. Therefore, this withdrawal allows a greater freedom from the pressure to conform. Finally, social withdrawal is gendered, meaning it is experienced differently by men and women. Because men focus on work and women focus on marriage and family, when they withdraw they will be unhappy and directionless until they adopt a role to replace their accustomed role that is compatible with the disengaged state (Cummings and Henry 1961).

The suggestion that old age was a distinct state in the life course, characterized by a distinct change in roles and activities, was groundbreaking when it was first introduced. However, the theory is no longer accepted in its classic form. Criticisms typically focus on the application of the idea that seniors universally naturally withdraw from society as they age, and that it does not allow for a wide variation in the way people experience aging (Hothschild 1975).

The social withdrawal that Cummings and Henry recognized (1961), and its notion that elderly people need to find replacement roles for those they've lost, is addressed anew in **activity theory**. According to this theory, activity levels and social involvement are key to this process, and key to happiness (Havinghurst 1961; Neugarten 1964; Havinghurst, Neugarten, and Tobin 1968). According to this theory, the more active and involved an elderly person is, the happier he or she will be. Critics of this theory point out that access to social opportunities and activity are not equally available to all. Moreover, not everyone finds fulfillment in the presence of others or participation in activities. Reformulations of this theory suggest that participation in informal activities, such as hobbies, are what most effect later life satisfaction (Lemon, Bengtson, and Petersen 1972).

According to **continuity theory,** the elderly make specific choices to maintain consistency in internal (personality structure, beliefs) and external structures (relationships), remaining active and involved throughout their elder years. This is an attempt to maintain social equilibrium and stability by making future decisions on the basis of already developed social roles (Atchley 1971; Atchley 1989). One criticism of this theory is its emphasis on so-called "normal" aging, which marginalizes those with chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's.

Note:
The Graying of American Prisons

Would you want to spend your retirement here? A growing elderly prison population requires asking questions about how to deal with senior inmates. (Photo courtesy of Claire Rowland/Wikimedia Commons)

Earl Grimes is a seventy-nine-year-old inmate at a state prison. He has undergone two cataract surgeries and takes about $1,000 a month worth of medication to manage a heart condition. He needs significant help moving around, which he obtains by bribing younger inmates. He is serving a life prison term for a murder he committed thirty-eight years—half a lifetime—ago (Warren 2002).

Grimes' situation exemplifies the problems facing prisons today. According to a recent report released by Human Rights Watch (2012), there are now more than 124,000 prisoners age fifty-five years or older and over 26,000 prisoners age sixty-five or older in the U.S. prison population. These numbers represent an exponential rise over the last two decades. Why are U.S. prisons graying so rapidly?

Two factors contribute significantly to this country's aging prison population. One is the tough-on-crime reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, when mandatory minimum sentencing and "three strikes" policies sent many people to jail for thirty years to life, even when the third strike was a relatively minor offense (Leadership Conference, n.d.). Many of today's elderly prisoners are those who were incarcerated thirty years ago for life sentences. The other factor influencing today's aging prison population is the aging of the overall population. As discussed in the section on aging in the United States, the percentage of people over sixty-five years old is increasing each year due to rising life expectancies and the aging of the baby boom generation.

So why should it matter that the elderly prison population is growing so swiftly? As discussed in the section on the process of aging, growing older is accompanied by a host of physical problems, like failing vision, mobility, and hearing. Chronic illnesses like heart disease, arthritis, and diabetes also become increasingly common as people age, whether they are in prison or not. In many cases, elderly prisoners are physically incapable of committing a violent—or possibly any—crime. Is it ethical to keep them locked up for the short remainder of their lives?

There seem to be a lot of reasons, both financial and ethical, to release some elderly prisoners to live the rest of their lives—and die—in freedom. However, few lawmakers are willing to appear soft on crime by releasing

convicted felons from prison, especially if their sentence was "life without parole" (Warren 2002).

Conflict Perspective

At a public protest, older people make their voices heard. In advocating for themselves, they help shape public policy and alter the allotment of available resources. (Photo courtesy of longislandwins/flickr)

Theorists working the conflict perspective view society as inherently unstable, an institution that privileges the powerful wealthy few while marginalizing everyone else. According to the guiding principle of conflict theory, social groups compete with other groups for power and scarce resources. Applied to society's aging population, the principle means that the elderly struggle with other groups—for example, younger society members—to retain a certain share of resources. At some point, this competition may become conflict.

For example, some people complain that the elderly get more than their fair share of society’s resources. In hard economic times, there is great concern about the huge costs of Social Security and Medicare. One of every four tax dollars, or about 28 percent, is spent on these two programs. In 1950, the federal government paid $781 million in Social Security payments. Now, the payments are 870 times higher. In 2008, the government paid $296 billion (Statistical Abstract 2011). The medical bills of the nation’s elderly population are rising dramatically. While there is more care available to certain segments of the senior community, it must be noted that the financial resources available to the aging can vary tremendously by race, social class, and gender.

There are three classic theories of aging within the conflict perspective. **Modernization theory** (Cowgill and Holmes 1972) suggests that the primary cause of the elderly losing power and influence in society are the parallel forces of industrialization and modernization. As societies modernize, the status of elders decreases, and they are increasingly likely to experience social exclusion. Before industrialization, strong social norms bound the younger generation to care for the older. Now, as societies industrialize, the nuclear family replaces the extended family. Societies become increasingly individualistic, and norms regarding the care of older people change. In an individualistic industrial society, caring for an elderly relative is seen as a voluntary obligation that may be ignored without fear of social censure.

The central reasoning of modernization theory is that as long as the extended family is the standard family, as in preindustrial economies, elders will have a place in society and a clearly defined role. As societies modernize, the elderly, unable to work outside of the home, have less to offer economically and are seen as a burden. This model may be applied to both the developed and the developing world, and it suggests that as people age they will be abandoned and lose much of their familial support since they become a nonproductive economic burden.

Another theory in the conflict perspective is **age stratification theory** (Riley, Johnson, and Foner 1972). Though it may seem obvious now, with our awareness of ageism, age stratification theorists were the first to suggest

that members of society might be stratified by age, just as they are stratified by race, class, and gender. Because age serves as a basis of social control, different age groups will have varying access to social resources such as political and economic power. Within societies, behavioral age norms, including norms about roles and appropriate behavior, dictate what members of age cohorts may reasonably do. For example, it might be considered deviant for an elderly woman to wear a bikini because it violates norms denying the sexuality of older females. These norms are specific to each age strata, developing from culturally based ideas about how people should "act their age."

Thanks to amendments to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), which drew attention to some of the ways in which our society is stratified based on age, U.S. workers no longer must retire upon reaching a specified age. As first passed in 1967, the ADEA provided protection against a broad range of age discrimination and specifically addressed termination of employment due to age, age specific layoffs, advertised positions specifying age limits or preferences, and denial of healthcare benefits to those over sixty-five years old (U.S. EEOC 2012).

Age stratification theory has been criticized for its broadness and its inattention to other sources of stratification and how these might intersect with age. For example, one might argue that an older white male occupies a more powerful role, and is far less limited in his choices, compared to an older white female based on his historical access to political and economic power.

Finally, **exchange theory** (Dowd 1975), a rational choice approach, suggests we experience an increased dependence as we age and must increasingly submit to the will of others because we have fewer ways of compelling others to submit to us. Indeed, inasmuch as relationships are based on mutual exchanges, as the elderly become less able to exchange resources, they will see their social circles diminish. In this model, the only means to avoid being discarded is to engage in resource management, like maintaining a large inheritance or participating in social exchange systems via child care. In fact, the theory may depend too much on the assumption that individuals are calculating. It is often criticized for affording too much

emphasis to material exchange and devaluing nonmaterial assets such as love and friendship.

The subculture of aging theory posits that the elderly create their own communities because they have been excluded from other groups. (Photo courtesy of Icnacio Palomo Duarte/flickr)

Symbolic Interactionism

Generally, theories within the symbolic interactionist perspective focus on how society is created through the day-to-day interaction of individuals, as well as the way people perceive themselves and others based on cultural symbols. This microanalytic perspective assumes that if people develop a sense of identity through their social interactions, their sense of self is dependent on those interactions. A woman whose main interactions with society make her feel old and unattractive may lose her sense of self. But a woman whose interactions make her feel valued and important will have a stronger sense of self and a happier life.

Symbolic interactionists stress that the changes associated with old age, in and of themselves, have no inherent meaning. Nothing in the nature of aging creates any particular, defined set of attitudes. Rather, attitudes toward the elderly are rooted in society.

One microanalytical theory is Rose's (1962) **subculture of aging theory**, which focuses on the shared community created by the elderly when they are excluded (due to age), voluntarily or involuntarily, from participating in other groups. This theory suggests that elders will disengage from society and develop new patterns of interaction with peers who share common backgrounds and interests. For example, a group consciousness may develop within such groups as AARP around issues specific to the elderly like the Medicare "doughnut hole," focused on creating social and political pressure to fix those issues. Whether brought together by social or political interests, or even geographic regions, elders may find a strong sense of community with their new group.

Another theory within the symbolic interaction perspective is **selective optimization with compensation theory**. Baltes and Baltes (1990) based their theory on the idea that successful personal development throughout the life course and subsequent mastery of the challenges associated with everyday life are based on the components of selection, optimization, and compensation. Though this happens at all stages in the life course, in the field of gerontology, researchers focus attention on balancing the losses associated with aging with the gains stemming from the same. Here, aging is a process and not an outcome, and the goals (compensation) are specific to the individual.

According to this theory, our energy diminishes as we age, and we select (selection) personal goals to get the most (optimize) for the effort we put into activities, in this way making up for (compensation) the loss of a wider range of goals and activities. In this theory, the physical decline postulated by disengagement theory may result in more dependence, but that is not necessarily negative, as it allows aging individuals to save their energy for the most meaningful activities. For example, a professor who values teaching sociology may participate in a phased retirement, never entirely

giving up teaching, but acknowledging personal physical limitations that allow teaching only one or two classes per year.

Swedish sociologist Lars Tornstam developed a symbolic interactionist theory called **gerotranscendence**: the idea that as people age, they transcend the limited views of life they held in earlier times. Tornstam believes that throughout the aging process, the elderly become less self-centered and feel more peaceful and connected to the natural world. Wisdom comes to the elderly, Tornstam's theory states, and as the elderly tolerate ambiguities and seeming contradictions, they let go of conflict and develop softer views of right and wrong (Tornstam 2005).

Tornstam does not claim that everyone will achieve wisdom in aging. Some elderly people might still grow bitter and isolated, feel ignored and left out, or become grumpy and judgmental. Symbolic interactionists believe that, just as in other phases of life, individuals must struggle to overcome their own failings and turn them into strengths.

Summary

The three major sociological perspectives inform the theories of aging. Theories in the functionalist perspective focus on the role of elders in terms of the functioning of society as a whole. Theories in the conflict perspective concentrate on how elders, as a group, are at odds with other groups in society. And theories in the symbolic interactionist perspective focus on how elders' identities are created through their interactions.

Further Research

New Dynamics of Aging is a web site produced by an interdisciplinary team at the University of Sheffield. It is supposedly the largest research program on aging in the United Kingdom to date. In studying the experiences of aging and factors that shape aging, including behaviors, biology, health, culture, history, economics, and technology, researchers are promoting healthy aging and helping dispel stereotypes. Learn more by logging onto its web site: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/new_dynamics_aging

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Glossary

activity theory

a theory which suggests that for individuals to enjoy old age and feel satisfied, they must maintain activities and find a replacement for the statuses and associated roles they have left behind as they aged

age stratification theory
: a theory which states that members of society are stratified by age, just as they are stratified by race, class, and gender

continuity theory
: a theory which states that the elderly make specific choices to maintain consistency in internal (personality structure, beliefs) and external structures (relationships), remaining active and involved throughout their elder years

disengagement theory
: a theory which suggests that withdrawing from society and social relationships is a natural part of growing old

exchange theory
: a theory which suggests that we experience an increased dependence as we age and must increasingly submit to the will of others, because we have fewer ways of compelling others to submit to us

gerotranscendence
: the idea that as people age, they transcend limited views of life they held in earlier times

modernization theory
: a theory which suggests that the primary cause of the elderly losing power and influence in society are the parallel forces of industrialization and modernization

selective optimization with compensation theory
: a theory based on the idea that successful personal development throughout the life course and subsequent mastery of the challenges associated with everyday life are based on the components of selection, optimization, and compensation

subculture of aging theory

a theory that focuses on the shared community created by the elderly when they are excluded (due to age), voluntarily or involuntarily, from participating in other groups

Introduction to Government and Politics class="introduction"

In 2011, thousands of Yemeni citizens demonstrated in the streets and protested political repression by their government (Photo courtesy of flickr)

The so-called "Arab Spring," which caught the world attention in 2011, was a series of political uprisings in several Islamic countries, including Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Syria, Tunisia, Qatar, and Yemen. The extent of protest, which was said to be organized through social networking by ordinary citizens, varied widely among these countries. In some places, violent events took place. In Libya, its leader Muammar Gaddafi was assassinated, which was videotaped and broadcast. Backed by Russia, by contrast, Bashar Hafez al-Assad of Syria keeps weathering the revolution.

The U.S. major media outlets excitedly reported the "Arab Spring" in very much positive lens, calling it the democratic movements simultaneously widespread in these Islamic countries. The New York Times wrote, for example, "The light from the Arab Spring rose from the ground up" (2011).

Some scholars and journalists outside of the major media, however, suspect if this was actually led by ordinary citizens. Based upon a full of evidence, some of them point out that the Arab Spring was actually funded and

orchestrated by the CIA, State Department, and historic CIA-funded foundations (AhamedBensaada.com 2015). According to them, the U.S. goal was to replace the political leaders unfriendly to the U.S. with those functioning for U.S. corporate and foreign policy interests.

What the "Arab Spring" actually meant remains to be under the thick darkness. But at least, we need to pay attention also to the voice raised outside of the major media outlets that are (remember?) owned by a few economically and politically powerful people. THAT'S POLITICS!

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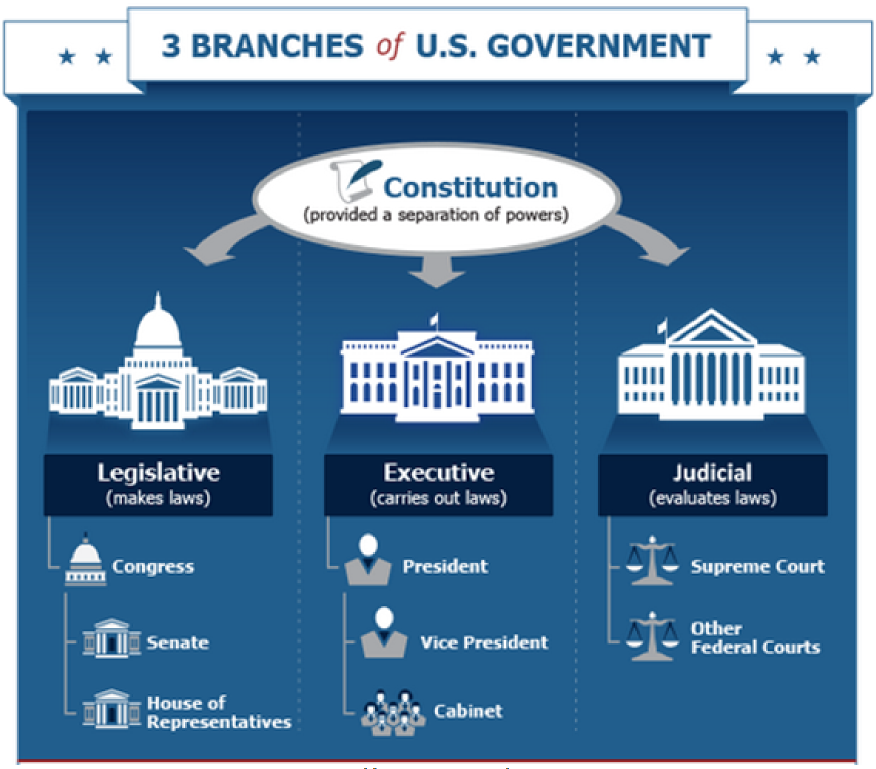
Power and Authority

- Define and differentiate between power and authority
- Identify and describe the three types of authority

Despite the differences between government systems in the Middle East and the United States, their governments play the same fundamental role: they exert control over the people they govern. The nature of that control—what we will define as power and authority—is an essential feature of politics.



Source: The U.S. Government <https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government>

For the most part, political scientists focus on how power is distributed in different areas of political systems. In the United States, the political power is divided into three branches, namely, **legislative**, **executive**, and **judicial** (see above). The main tasks of the branched are:

- The legislative branch (Congress) makes laws;
- The executive branch (Cabinet led by the President) carries out laws; and
- The judicial branch (Supreme Court) evaluates laws.

What Is Power?

The G20 (or Group of Twenty) meeting at Osaka, Japan, 2019. (Photo courtesy of flickr)

Max Weber defined **power** as "the ability to impose one's own will upon others... unconditionally against other wills" (Weber 1922). This "unconditionally" means no matter what or even if others resist one's will. On the global level, for example, powerful nations rule weaker nations by force or huge financial loan, no matter what. That's power.

Sword vs. Debt
The second U.S. president, John Adams, is credited with having said "There are two ways to conquer and enslave a nation. One is by sword [or force]. The other is by debt [huge financial loan]." Until World War II, powerful nations conquered weaker ones by force (sword), called colonialism. After WWII, for which colonialism can no longer be justified, powerful ones use

financial loan (debt) in more sophisticated fashion, which they themselves sweetly call "development assistance." In reality, though, it is called neocolonialism. Either way, power enables one to impose his/her will upon others, unconditionally against other wills.

Neocolonialism
According to John Perkins (2004), the strategic order of neocolonialism, also called “corporatocracy,” is as follows: (1) bribing top leaders of weaker countries to get help from them; (2) offering huge financial loan (debt); (3) using that money, renovating the weaker countries in many ways (infrastructure, military bases, privatization of public institutions); (4) sending agents of multinational corporations; (5) manipulating natural resources and exploiting cheap labor (slavery). When top leaders (such as Saddam Hussein) refuse to accept bribes, 3 steps can follow: (1) assassination, (2) coup d'état, and (3) invasion by force (war). Perkins suggests that what happened to Iraq in 2003 is a perfect example of this invasion by force.

John Perkins's interview is available on YouTube, titled "Confessions of an Economic Hitman - John Perkins | Short Documentary." It's about 26 minutes long. Watch it: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWuAct1BxHU.

Public Opinions

The government power is based *after all* upon violence. Think about the police and the military, for example. By contrast, the power of non-governmental leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi, is based upon the number of people who support them. Recall the NAACP, for example (see below, too). Instead of violence, such leaders rely on a variety of nonviolent protest strategies such as rallies, sit-ins, marches, petitions, and boycotts.

What is the most important task for politicians to do? The answer is: to be elected, to be reelected, to be re-reelected... Nothing is more important than this for them. In order to do so, they must be very careful about the trend of **public opinions**. Each one of us is powerless, for sure. But a collection of

our opinions, if not misled by the media, can be more powerful than a bunch of foxy politicians.

The Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, which declared racial segregation in school to be unconstitutional, can be seen as a classical example of the power of collective voices. Prior to this decision, there had been steadily growing public pressure led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (**NAACP**), by far the most important civil rights organization in the U.S. Its membership jumped from 50,000 in 1940 to 450,000 in 1946 (Patterson 2001). The NAACP, with only 800 branches in 1939, expanded to 14,000 branches by 1948. Eleven states and 28 cities in the North enacted laws between 1945 and 1951 that established Fair Employment Practices Commissions (FEPCs); 18 states approved legislation calling for the end of racial discrimination in public accommodations... This huge momentum eventually led the entire nation to the civil rights movement (1954-1968). (More will be discussed in Ch. 19, Social Movements and Social Change).

Millions of young people raised their voices at protests around the world on September 20, 2019 (NPR 2019). They demanded urgent action on climate change. Some of the first rallies began in Australia, and then spread from Pacific islands to India and Turkey and across Europe. In the U.S., more than 800 marches were planned. Who's the opinion leader? A 16-year-old Swedish girl, Greta Thunberg (see below), who was later chosen by the Time magazine as the person of the year, 2019.

Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old leader of a global protest against inaction on climate change, marched at a rally in New York City, Sept. 20, 2019. Around the world, millions joined her. (npr.org. Sept. 20, 2019)

Misunderstanding and Understanding Terrorism

Referring terrorists, saying "They are crazy" is easy--which most people do--but it would never help us understand what's actually happening. In his book *Misunderstanding Terrorism* (2017), Dr. Marc Sageman, a veteran counterterrorism researcher and former CIA operations officer, argues that 16 years after 9/11, the war on terror still appears to have no end in sight, driven on by a circular logic of violence and retribution.

Sageman further argues that identity politics are also what fundamentally drives the terrorists themselves. U.S. government policies can consciously or inadvertently fuel a sense of conflict between different groups, in this case, Muslims and Westerners, or what sociologists call "out-group" and "in-group." Several government studies have pointed to politics as an igniter, rather than an extinguisher, of terrorism, finding U.S. foreign policy as the most frequently cited motivation.

Psychologist John Horgan (cited in "Understanding Terrorism" by DeAngelis 2009, p. 60; paraphrased) observes that terrorists rarely meet

psychiatric criteria for insanity, and that people who join terrorist recruitment tend to:

1. Feel angry but powerless in the current situation;
2. Identify with perceived victims of the social injustice;
3. Feel the need to take action;
4. Believe that engaging in violence against the state is not immoral;
5. Have friends or family sympathetic to the cause;
6. Believe that joining a movement offers a heightened sense of identity.

An international panel of leading experts on terrorism met in Oslo to discuss root causes of terrorism on the macro level (Bjørgo 2003). According to the panel, there are a number of preconditions and precipitants for the emergence of various forms of terrorism. They include, among many others:

- Foreign domination through puppet regimes.
- Repression by foreign occupation.
- Illegitimate or corrupt governments.
- Rapid modernization
- Cycles of revenge.

Related to "cycles of revenge" above, a web news organization "The Intercept" (2016) critically wrote that U.S. media outlets love to dramatize and endlessly highlight Western victims of violence, while rendering almost completely invisible the victims of their own side’s violence. Over the past several years, the U.S. has launched hideous civilian-slaughtering strikes in [the Middle East]. Recently, for example, Fighter jets from a U.S. coalition bombed a market in Yemen. About 120 people were killed, including more than 20 children.

In addition, according to McCartney et al. (2015), we have unmanned drones operated by remote control that can dispatch to kill people that the president and his team decide are our enemies (p. 86). The drone wars stated small, with occasional attacks to take out top-level commanders of Al Qaeda (p. 156). Obama’s team escalated these wars to a peak of 132 attacks during 2010, and about 85 each in the next two years. By 2010, one high-

value target [a terrorist leader] was killed per 147 total deaths, a number way larger than those estimated by the U.S. government (see below).

United Nations condemns mounting casualties after intensive air campaigns (The Guardian 2017)

Yemeni people carry coffins of people killed in airstrikes in Sana'a. Photograph: Xinhua/Barcroft Images

Types of Authority

Authority refers to accepted power—that is, power that people agree to follow. People listen to authority figures because they feel that these individuals are worthy of respect. Generally speaking, people perceive the objectives and demands of an authority figure as reasonable and beneficial.

Besides formal offices, authority can arise from tradition and personal qualities. Max Weber realized this when he examined individual action as it relates to authority, as well as large-scale structures of authority and how they relate to a society's economy. Based on this work, Weber developed a classification system for authority. His three types of authority include

traditional authority, charismatic authority and legal-rational authority (Weber 1922).

	Traditional	Charismatic	Legal-Rational
Source of Power	A belief established (or forged) in ancient times	The person and people's faith in him/her	The people and their trust in the authority
Leadership Style	Ceremonial and/or self-willed	Often dictatorial but very well supported	The power resides in the position or the office, not in the person
Example	The king; the emperor	Jesus Christ, Martin Luther King, Jr.	U.S. presidency and Congress

Weber’s Three Types of Authority

Traditional Authority

According to Weber, the power of **traditional authority** is accepted because that has traditionally been the case; its legitimacy exists because it has been accepted for a long time. Britain’s Queen Elizabeth, for instance, occupies a position that she inherited based on the traditional rules of succession for the monarchy. People adhere to traditional authority because

they are invested in the past and feel obligated to perpetuate it. In this type of authority, a ruler typically has no real force to carry out his will or maintain his position but depends primarily on a group's respect.

Traditional authority can be intertwined with race, class, and gender. In most societies, for instance, men are more likely to be privileged than women and thus are more likely to hold roles of authority. Similarly, members of dominant racial groups or upper-class families also win respect more readily. In the United States, the Kennedy family, which has produced many prominent politicians, exemplifies this model.

Charismatic Authority

Followers accept the power of **charismatic authority** because they are drawn to the leader's personal qualities. The appeal of a charismatic leader can be extraordinary, and can inspire followers to make unusual sacrifices or to persevere in the midst of great hardship and persecution. Charismatic leaders usually emerge in times of crisis and offer innovative or radical solutions. They may even offer a vision of a new world order. Hitler's rise to power in the postwar economic depression of Germany is an example.

Charismatic leaders tend to hold power for short durations, and according to Weber, they are just as likely to be tyrannical as they are heroic. Diverse male leaders such as Hitler, Napoleon, Jesus Christ, César Chávez, Malcolm X, and Winston Churchill are all considered charismatic leaders. Because so few women have held dynamic positions of leadership throughout history, the list of charismatic female leaders is comparatively short. Many historians consider figures such as Joan of Arc, Margaret Thatcher, and Mother Teresa to be charismatic leaders.

Legal-Rational Authority

According to Weber, power made legitimate by laws, written rules, and regulations is termed **legal-rational authority**. In this type of authority,

power is vested in a particular rationale, system, or ideology and not necessarily in the person who implements the specifics of that doctrine. A nation that follows a constitution applies this type of authority.

Of course, ideals are seldom replicated in the real world. Few governments or leaders can be neatly categorized. Some leaders, like Mohandas Gandhi, for instance, can be considered charismatic *and* legal-rational authority figures. Similarly, a leader or government can start out exemplifying one type of authority and gradually evolve or change into another type.

Summary

Sociologists examine government and politics in terms of their impact on individuals and larger social systems. Power is an entity or individual’s ability to control or direct others, while authority is influence that is predicated on perceived legitimacy. Max Weber studied power and authority, differentiating between the two concepts and formulating a system for classifying types of authority.

Further Research

Want to learn more about sociologists at work in the real world? Read this blog posting to learn more about the roles sociology scholars played in the midst of the Arab Spring uprising:
http://openstaxcollege.org/l/sociology_Arab_Spring

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Glossary

authority
: power that people accept because it comes from a source that is perceived as legitimate

charismatic authority
: power legitimized on the basis of a leader's exceptional personal qualities

patrimonialism
: a type of authority wherein military and administrative factions enforce the power of the master

power

the ability to exercise one’s will over others

rational-legal authority
power that is legitimized by rules, regulations, and laws

traditional authority
power legitimized on the basis of long-standing customs

Forms of Government

- Define common forms of government, such as monarchy, oligarchy, dictatorship, and democracy
- Compare common forms of government and identify real-life examples of each


Photo courtesy of Reuters/KCNA

The North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, a dictator?
(Photo courtesy of flickr)

In this section discussed are "forms of government." They include: (1) anarchy, (2) monarchy, (3) oligarchy, (4) dictatorship, and (5) democracy. The distinction between oligarchy (government ruled by a few) and dictatorship (by a single person) is, in reality, not simple. Although Kim Jong-un of North Korea (shown above) is considered a dictator, for example, he is actually supported by a few knowledgeable people. Even Adolf Hitler of the Nazi Germany was supported by a few powerful members including military commanders, administrative leaders and Ministers of the Nazi Party.

Also, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between oligarchy and democracy (government based on the power entrusted by the people). As discussed below, indeed, many scholars consider the U.S. to be an oligarchy (ruled by a few super powerful elite, such as the ones who own [and

manipulate] all the major media outlets in the U.S. [see Ch. 10, Media and Technology]).

Anarchy

The term **anarchy** has two different meanings, one of which is negative and the other, positive. The negative one indicates the politically chaotic situation in which no champion can govern the nation properly. Over the sovereignty of the nation, various forms of civil (or guerrilla) wars can popup here and there. As the police, just like the military, barely function, the entire nation looks like a lawless jungle. Many people, including children, flee from their own homelands (New York Times 2015). Such situations can be observed today in many countries, such as Sudan, Kenya, Syria, Somalia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and many, many more. In most cases, the chaotic situations can be seen as the product of colonialism or neocolonialism of these countries by powerful countries.

The positive one is a political philosophy that rejects parliamentary politics dominated by the elite. It's radically anti-authoritarian and sweetly utopian. Its roots, closely intertwined with socialism, can be traced back to the middle of the nineteenth century, or may be older. Its movements were crushed one after another, however, with the Paris Commune in 1871, suppressed in the United States after an anarchist shot President William McKinley in 1901, destroyed by Franco in the Spanish Civil War of the late 1930's and left to wither away with the 1960's student radicalism (New York Times 2000). Ideologically opposed to power and ambivalent about organization, anarchists perpetually live on the fringe of great movements. The quest for pure rebellion in some punk rock lyrics can be seen as an example of anarchism--anarchism without the utopian ideal, though.

Monarchy

A **monarchy** is a government in which a single person (a monarch) rules until he/she dies or abdicates the throne. Closely related to the form of traditional authority, a monarch claims the rights to the title by way of hereditary succession or as a result of some sort of divine appointment. As mentioned above, the monarchies of most modern nations are ceremonial

remnants of tradition, and individuals who hold titles in such sovereignties are often aristocratic figureheads.

A few nations today, however, are run by governments wherein a monarch has absolute or unmitigated power. Such nations are called **absolute monarchies**. Although governments and regimes are constantly changing across the global landscape, it is generally safe to say that most modern absolute monarchies are concentrated in the Middle East and Africa. The small, oil-rich nation of Oman, for instance, is an example of an absolute monarchy. In this nation, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said has ruled since the 1970s. Recently, living conditions and opportunities for Oman's citizens have improved, but many citizens who live under the reign of an absolute ruler must contend with oppressive or unfair policies that are installed based on the unchecked whims or political agendas of that leader.

In today's global political climate, monarchies far more often take the form of **constitutional monarchies**, governments of nations that recognize monarchs but require these figures to abide by the laws of a greater constitution. Many countries that are now constitutional monarchies evolved from governments that were once considered absolute monarchies. In most cases, constitutional monarchies, such as Great Britain and Japan, feature elected prime ministers whose leadership role is far more involved and significant than that of its titled monarchs. In spite of their limited authority, monarchs endure in such governments because people enjoy their ceremonial significance and the pageantry of their rites.

Queen Noor of Jordan is the dowager queen of this constitutional monarchy and has limited political authority. Queen Noor is American by birth, but relinquished her citizenship when she married. She is a noted global advocate for Arab-Western relations. (Photo courtesy of Skoll World Forum/flickr)

Oligarchy

The power in an **oligarchy** is held by a small, elite group. Unlike in a monarchy, members of an oligarchy do not necessarily achieve their statuses based on ties to noble ancestry. Rather, they may ascend to positions of power because of military might, economic power, or similar circumstances.

The concept of oligarchy is somewhat elusive; rarely does a society openly define itself as an oligarchy. Generally, the word carries negative connotations and conjures notions of a corrupt group whose members make unfair policy decisions in order to maintain their privileged positions. Many modern nations that claim to be democracies are really oligarchies. In fact, some prominent journalists, such as Paul Krugman, who won a Nobel laureate prize in economics, have labeled the United States an oligarchy, pointing to the influence of large corporations and Wall Street executives on U.S. policy (Krugman 2011). Other political analysts assert that all democracies are really just “elected oligarchies,” or systems in which citizens must vote for an individual who is part of a pool of candidates who come from the society’s elite ruling class (Winters 2011).

Oligarchies have existed throughout history, and today many consider Russia an example of oligarchic political structure. After the fall of

communism, groups of business owners captured control of this nation's natural resources and have used the opportunity to expand their wealth and political influence. Once an oligarchic power structure has been established, it can be very difficult for middle- and lower-class citizens to advance their socioeconomic status.

Is the United States an Oligarchy?

Some scholars believe that the United States has now embarked on a gilded age, pointing out that the "400 wealthiest American families now own more than the 'lower' 150 million Americans put together" (Schultz 2011), and "the top 10% of earners took in more than half of the country's overall income in 2012, the highest proportion recorded in a century of government record keeping" (Lowery 2014).

Many of the super–rich use their economic clout to purchase more than luxury items; wealthy individuals and corporations are major political donors. Based on campaign finance reform legislation in 1971 and 2002, political campaign contributions were regulated and limited; however, the 2012 Supreme Court decision in the case of *Citizen's United versus the Federal Election Commission* repealed many of those restrictions. The Court ruled that contributions of corporations and unions to Political Action Committees (**PACs**) are a form of free speech that cannot be abridged and so cannot be limited or disclosed.

Opponents believe this is potentially a step in **oligarchy** in the United States; the ultra-wealthy and those who control the purse strings of large corporations and unions, in effect, are able to elect their candidate of choice through their unlimited spending power. Krugman (2011) says, "We have a society in which money is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few people, and in which that concentration of income and wealth threatens to make us a democracy in name only."

During the 2016 presidential election, by the end of August, just 10 mega donors contributed nearly 20% of the $1.1 billion raised by super PACs (The Washington Post 2016). Although Lincoln's famous phrase "**of the people, by the people, for the people**" is at the heart of the U.S. system, Nobel-Prize winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz (2011) argues that in reality, it is "**of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%**." Inspired by this, a protest

movement called Occupy Wall Street (OWS) took place in 2011. The protesters claimed that "**We are 99%**," raising the issues of social and economic inequality and the perceived undue influence of corporations on government through super PACs.

Dictatorship

Power in a **dictatorship** is held by a single person that wields complete and absolute authority over a government and population. Like some absolute monarchies, dictatorships may be corrupt and seek to limit or even eradicate the liberties of the general population. Dictators use a variety of means to perpetuate their authority. Economic and military might, as well as intimidation and brutality are often foremost among their tactics; individuals are less likely to rebel when they are starving and fearful. Many dictators start out as military leaders and are conditioned to the use of violence against opposition.

Some dictators also possess the personal appeal that Max Weber identified with a charismatic leader. Subjects of such a dictator may believe that the leader has special ability or authority and may be willing to submit to his or her authority. The late Kim Jong-Il, North Korean dictator, and his successor, Kim Jong-Un, exemplify this type of charismatic dictatorship.

Some dictatorships do not align themselves with any particular belief system or ideology; the goal of this type of regime is usually limited to preserving the authority of the dictator. A **totalitarian dictatorship** is even more oppressive and attempts to control all aspects of its subjects' lives; including occupation, religious beliefs, and number of children permitted in each family. Citizens may be forced to publicly demonstrate their faith in the regime by participating in marches and demonstrations.

Some "benevolent" dictators, such as Napoleon and Anwar Sadat, are credited with advancing their people's standard of living or exercising a moderate amount of evenhandedness. Others grossly abuse their power. Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein, Cambodia's Pol Pot, and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, for instance, are heads of state who earned a reputation for leading through fear and intimidation.

Democracy

A **democracy** is a form of government that strives to provide all citizens with an equal voice, or vote, in determining state policy, regardless of their level of socioeconomic status. Another important fundamental of the democratic state is the establishment and governance of a just and comprehensive constitution that delineates the roles and responsibilities of leaders and citizens alike.

Democracies, in general, ensure certain basic rights for their citizens. First and foremost, citizens are free to organize political parties and hold elections. Leaders, once elected, must abide by the terms of the given nation’s constitution and are limited in the powers they can exercise, as well as in the length of the duration of their terms. Most democratic societies also champion freedom of individual speech, the press, and assembly, and they prohibit unlawful imprisonment. Of course, even in a democratic society, the government constrains citizens' total freedom to act however they wish. A democratically elected government does this by passing laws and writing regulations that, at least ideally, reflect the will of the majority of its people.

Although the United States champions the democratic ideology, it is not a “pure” democracy. In a purely democratic society, all citizens would vote on all proposed legislation, and this is not how laws are passed in the United States. There is a practical reason for this: a pure democracy would be hard to implement. Thus, the United States is a constitution-based federal republic in which citizens elect representatives to make policy decisions on their behalf. The term **representative democracy**, which is virtually synonymous with *republic*, can also be used to describe a government in which citizens elect representatives to promote policies that favor their interests. In the United States, representatives are elected at local and state levels, and the votes of the Electoral College determine who will hold the office of president. Each of the three branches of the U.S. government—the executive, judicial, and legislative—is held in check by the other branches.

Summary

Nations are governed by different political systems, including monarchies, oligarchies, dictatorships, and democracies. Generally speaking, citizens of nations wherein power is concentrated in one leader or a small group are more likely to suffer violations of civil liberties and experience economic inequality. Many nations that are today organized around democratic ideals started out as monarchies or dictatorships but have evolved into more egalitarian systems. Democratic ideals, although hard to implement and achieve, promote basic human rights and justice for all citizens.

Further Research

The Tea Party is among the highest-profile grassroots organizations active in U.S. politics today. What is its official platform? Examine the Tea Party website to find out more information at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/2eTeaPartygov.

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Glossary

absolute monarchies
: governments wherein a monarch has absolute or unmitigated power

anarchy
: the absence of any organized government

constitutional monarchies
: national governments that recognize monarchs but require these figures to abide by the laws of a greater constitution

democracy
: a form of government that provides all citizens with an equal voice or vote in determining state policy

dictatorship
: a form of government in which a single person (or a very small group) wields complete and absolute authority over a government or populace

after the dictator rises to power, usually through economic or military might

monarchy
: a form of government in which a single person (a monarch) rules until that individual dies or abdicates the throne

oligarchy
: a form of government in which power is held by a small, elite group

representative democracy
: a government wherein citizens elect officials to represent their interests

totalitarian dictatorship
: an extremely oppressive form of dictatorship in which most aspects of citizens’ lives are controlled by the leader

Politics in the United States

- Explain the significance of “one person, one vote” in determining U.S. policy
- Discuss how voter participation affects politics in the United States
- Explore the influence of race, gender, and class issues on the voting process

Occupy Wall Street joined the NAACP as thousands marched in midtown Manhattan on December 10, 2011 to defend voting rights (Photo courtesy: Viewpointdaily).

Voter Participation

Voter participation is essential to the success of the U.S. political system. However, in any given election year, roughly half the population does not vote (United States Elections Project 2010). Some years have seen even lower turnouts; in 2010, for instance, only 37.8% of the population participated in the electoral process (United States Elections Project 2011). Poor turnout can skew election results, particularly if one age or socioeconomic group is more diligent in its efforts to make it to the polls.

Thanks, maybe, to the so-called divided government under President Trump, however, the midterm elections in 2018 showed a bit different

picture--a record-breaking turnout. Despite long lines, broken machines, and bad weather in some locations, an estimated 113 million people participated, making this the first midterm in history to exceed over 100 million votes, with 49% of eligible voters participating in the election (CBS News 2018).

Democrats gained a net 27 seats in the House of Representatives, while Republicans expanded their majority by gaining a net two seats in the Senate. Democrats also flipped gubernatorial (governors') seats in seven states (ibid.). Well, with a very high turnout, Democrats won this, and Republicans won that... What does this mean? How do you predict if Trump will win in 2020? Let's see voters' attitudes and behaviors previously observed and think about voting issues by race, gender, and class.

Voting Issues by Race, Gender, and Class

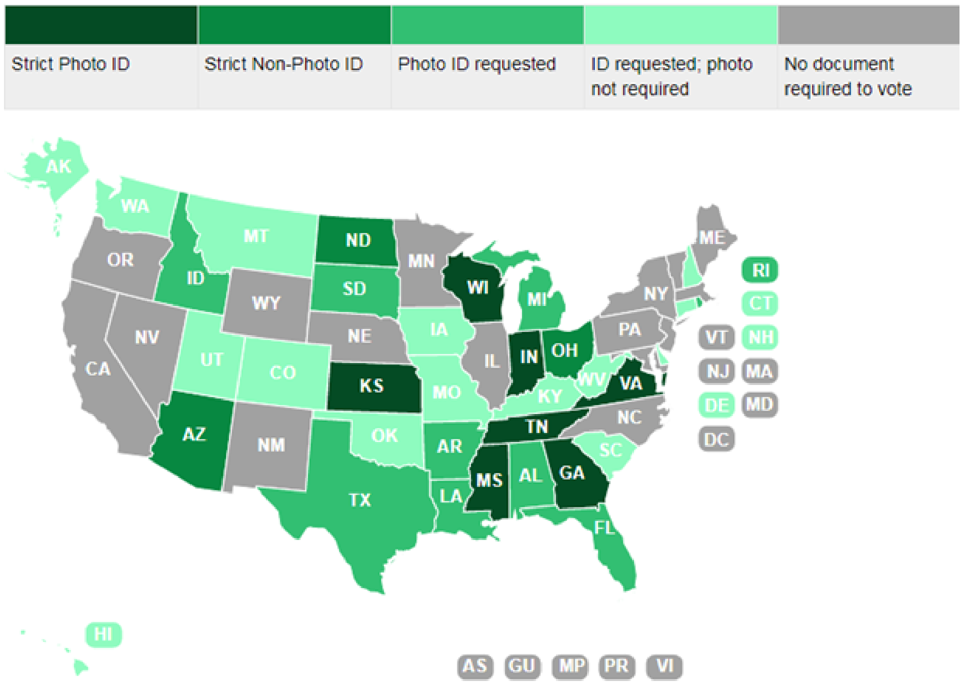
Race

Although recent records have shown more minorities voting now than ever before, this trend is still fairly new. Historically, African Americans and other minorities have been underrepresented at the polls. Black men were not allowed to vote at all until after the Civil War, and black women gained the right to vote along with other women only with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

Even after having become eligible voters, though, African Americans kept being discouraged by discriminatory legislation, passed in many states, which required poll taxes and literacy tests of prospective voters. In order to vote, that is, they had to pay money (between $1 and $2, or between $7 and $15 in 2013) and to demonstrate their ability to read and write. These requirements were not outlawed until the late 1960s.

Are they now free to vote? Not so fast. Still today, many states maintain laws quite disturbing to them, such as those that require potential voters to get voter IDs (see below).

Voter Identification Laws in Effect in 2018



Source: NCSL 2018, "Voter Identification Requirements | Voter ID Laws."

A total of 34 states out of 50 maintain laws requesting or requiring voters to show some form of identification at the polls, all of which are in force in 2018 (NCSL 2018). The purpose of the laws is said to prevent voter fraud and make the voting system more secure. But such laws heavily discourage many, especially minorities, to use their own voting rights. Thus, many argue that this discouragement is the real purpose of the laws.

The laws require potential voters to spend extra time, energy, and money to get their voter IDs. In some areas, for example, the offices that issue IDs are open during limited hours (Washington Post 2012). In an extreme case, the office in Sauk City, Wis., runs only on the fifth Wednesday of any month. This office is thus open just a few days a year. Nearly half a million eligible voters in the 10 states do not have access to a vehicle and live more than 10 miles from their nearest state ID-issuing office. Voters who do not have their birth certificates or marriage licenses may have to pay additional costs ($8-$25 for a birth certificate; $8-$20 for a marriage license) because those documents are required to obtain a photo ID in some states. After all, many eligible voters--again, mostly minorities--give up their voting rights, saying, "Why bother?"

Gender
Through long history of struggles, women won the suffrage (the voting right), first, in various states including New York in 1917, and then nationally in 1920. Evidence suggests, however, that the women's suffrage has not directly translated into equal voting power, yet. Indeed, although women are more likely than men to vote, men are way more likely than women to be in political office. Relative to their presence in the U.S. population, women--and racial/ethnic minorities--are still today underrepresented in the U.S. Congress.

Class
Like race and gender, social class also influences voting practices. The tendency is: lower class people are less likely than middle class people to vote. Several reasons stand behind this tendency (Raymond 2010). First, it's difficult for workers in low-paying jobs to leave their workplaces to vote. Also, who would look after their children while they vote? As discussed above, furthermore, voter ID laws can discourage them. In addition, they can hardly believe their vote will count. In conclusion, very sad though, "Why bother?"

Summary

The success and validity of U.S. democracy hinges on free, fair elections that are characterized by the support and participation of diverse citizens. In spite of their importance, elections have low participation. In the past, the voice of minority groups was nearly imperceptible in elections, but recent trends have shown increased voter turnout across many minority races and ethnicities. In the past, the creation and sustenance of a fair voting process has necessitated government intervention, particularly on the legislative level. The *Reynolds v. Sims* case, with its landmark “one person, one vote” ruling, is an excellent example of such action.

Further Research

The 1965 Voting Rights Act was preceded by Lyndon Johnson’s signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Both articles were instrumental in establishing equal rights for African Americans. Check out Cornell University’s website

on this topic to learn more about this civil rights legislation: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Cornell_civil_rights

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Glossary

one person, one vote
: a concept holding that each person’s vote should be counted equally

politics
: a means of studying a nation’s or group’s underlying social norms as values as evidenced through its political structure and practices

Theoretical Perspectives on Government and Power

- Understand how functionalists, conflict theorists, and interactionists view government and politics

Sociologists rely on paradigms to make sense of their own studies. Each paradigm looks at the study of sociology through a distinct lens. The sociological examination of government and power can thus be evaluated using a variety of perspectives that help the evaluator gain a broader perspective. Functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism are widely recognized stances in practice today.

Functionalism

According to functionalism, the government has four main purposes: planning and directing society, meeting social needs, maintaining law and order, and managing international relations.

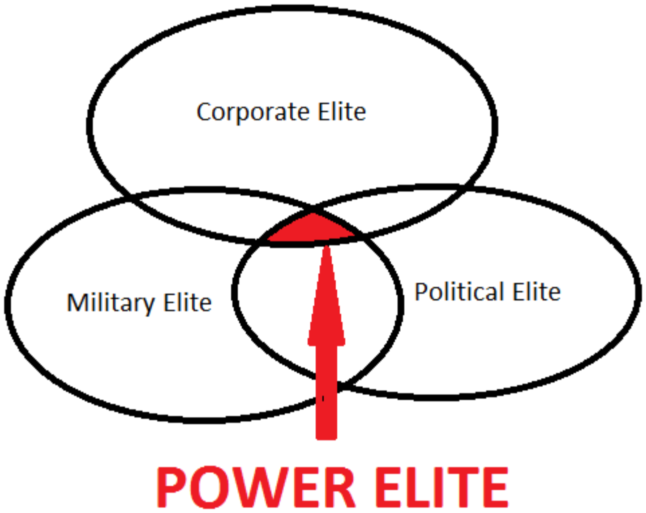
Functionalists view government and politics as a way to enforce norms and regulate conflict. Functionalists see active social change, such as the sit-in on Wall Street, as undesirable because it forces change and, as a result, undesirable things that might have to be compensated for. Functionalists seek consensus and order in society. Dysfunction creates social problems that lead to social change. For instance, functionalists would see monetary political contributions as a way of keeping people connected to the democratic process. This would be in opposition to a conflict theorist who would see this financial contribution as a way for the rich to perpetuate their own wealth.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory focuses on the social inequalities and power imbalance within society. Karl Marx was a seminal force in developing the conflict theory perspective; he viewed social structure, rather than individual personality characteristics, as the cause of many social problems, such as poverty and crime. Marx believed that conflict between groups struggling to

either attain wealth and power or keep the wealth and power was inevitable in a capitalist society.

Power Elite--aka, the Military-Industrial Complex



C. Wright Mills (1956) elaborated on some of Marx's concepts, coining the phrase **power elite** to describe what he saw as the small group of powerful people who control much of the nation. The structure of power elite (also known as the military-industrial complex) consists of, as shown above, (1) corporate elite, (2) military elite, and (3) political elite. The same individuals move around these three sections to serve themselves, exchanging honorable positions (such as the president, the vise president, secretary of state, and so on), money (the U.S. government budget), and power (over not just the nation but also the entire world).

According to Mills, "the long-term trends of the power structure have been greatly speeded up since World War II" (ibid., p. 163). He suggests that "American capitalism is now in considerable part a military capitalism, and the most important relation of the big corporation to the state rests on the coincidence of interests between military and corporate needs, as defined by warlords and corporate rich."

The revolving-door system--i.e., the easy movement of high-ranking [government] officers into jobs with major defense contractors and the reverse movement of top executives in major defense contractors into high

Pentagon [or Congress] jobs--is solid evidence for the military-industrial complex in operation (McCartney et al. 2015).

More specifically, for example, Dick Cheney, the vice president under the George W. Bush administration, served as CEO of Halliburton, one of the largest defense contractors hired by the U.S. military during the U.S. wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan (McCartney et al. 2015). Similarly, before becoming Bush’s national security advisor and secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice served on the board of Chevron, one of the world’s largest oil companies. They led the U.S. to the war, and their companies made a lot of profits.

The U.S. government spent its budget for the wars, Homeland Security, nuclear weapons, veterans benefits, and various other defense-related expenses. To be more specific? Well, the defense-related expenses include the $600 toilet seat, $660 ashtrays, $76,000 coffee makers, and $74,000 ladders (McCartney et al. 2015). In addition to defense contractors who build weapons, the military today depends on service contractors who peel potatoes, serve meals, and do laundry for U.S. troops. As of 2013, DOD had 108,000 contract workers in Afghanistan, compared to 65,700 troops--1.6 contractors for each solder.

Senator Bernie Sanders contends, saying, "We say to the Military Industrial Complex that we will not continue to spend $700 billion a year on the military. We want and need a strong defense. But we do not have to spend more than the next 10 nations combined" (RealClear Politics 2019).

President Donald Trump recently displayed his critical attitude toward the military industrial complex, saying, "They [the military industrial complex] never want to leave, they always want to fight. No. I don't want to fight, but you do have situations like Iran. You can't let them have nuclear weapons. You just can't let that happen" (CNSNews 2019). On the other hand, before this interview, he nominated Patrick Shanahan, a former Boeing executive for his defense secretary. It may seem, then, that he actually wants to be included in what McCartney et al. (2015) call this "revolving-door system" as the boss.

Conflict Theory in Action

Although military technology has evolved considerably over the course of history, the fundamental causes of conflict among nations remain essentially the same. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Even before there were modern nation-states, political conflicts arose among competing societies or factions of people. Vikings attacked continental European tribes in search of loot, and, later, European explorers landed on foreign shores to claim the resources of indigenous groups. Conflicts also arose among competing groups within individual sovereignties, as evidenced by the bloody French Revolution. Nearly all conflicts in the past and present, however, are spurred by basic desires: the drive to protect or gain territory and wealth, and the need to preserve liberty and autonomy.

According to sociologist and philosopher Karl Marx, such conflicts are necessary, although ugly, steps toward a more egalitarian society. Marx saw a historical pattern in which revolutionaries toppled elite power structures,

after which wealth and authority became more evenly dispersed among the population, and the overall social order advanced. In this pattern of change through conflict, people tend to gain greater personal freedom and economic stability (1848).

Modern-day conflicts are still driven by the desire to gain or protect power and wealth, whether in the form of land and resources or in the form of liberty and autonomy. Internally, groups within the U.S. struggle within the system, by trying to achieve the outcomes they prefer. Political differences over budget issues, for example, led to the recent shutdown of the federal government, and alternative political groups, such as the Tea Party, are gaining a significant following.

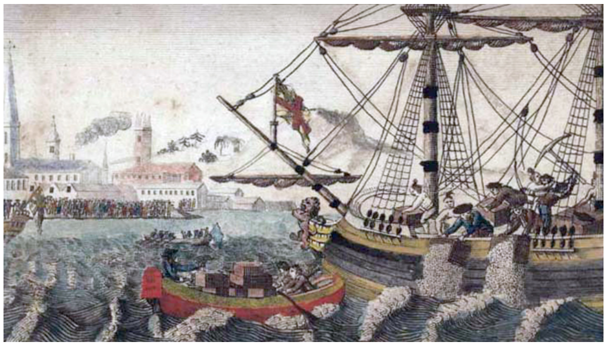
The Arab Spring exemplifies oppressed groups acting collectively to change their governmental systems, seeking both greater liberty and greater economic equity. Some nations, such as Tunisia, have successfully transitioned to governmental change; others, like Egypt, have not yet reached consensus on a new government.

Unfortunately, the change process in some countries reached the point of active combat between the established government and the portion of the population seeking change, often called revolutionaries or rebels. Libya and Syria are two such countries; the multifaceted nature of the conflict, with several groups competing for their own desired ends, makes creation of a peaceful resolution more challenging.

Popular uprisings of citizens seeking governmental change have occurred this year in Bosnia, Brazil, Greece, Iran, Jordan, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, and most recently in Hong Kong. Although much smaller in size and scope, demonstrations took place in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, where people protested the local government’s handling of a controversial shooting by the police.

The internal situation in the Ukraine is compounded by military aggression from neighboring Russia, which forcibly annexed the Crimean Peninsula, a geographic region of Ukraine, in early 2014 and threatens further military action in that area. This is an example of conflict driven by a desire to gain wealth and power in the form of land and resources. The United States and

the European Union are watching the developing crisis closely and have implemented economic sanctions against Russia.



What symbols of the Boston Tea Party are represented in this painting? How might a symbolic interactionist explain the way the modern-day Tea Party has reclaimed and repurposed these symbolic meanings? (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Symbolic Interactionism

Other sociologists study government and power by relying on the framework of symbolic interactionism, which is grounded in the works of Max Weber and George H. Mead.

Symbolic interactionism, as it pertains to government, focuses its attention on figures, emblems, or individuals that represent power and authority. Many diverse entities in larger society can be considered symbolic: trees, doves, wedding rings. Images that represent the power and authority of the United States include the White House, the eagle, and the American flag.

The Seal of the President of the United States, along with the office in general, incites respect and reverence in many Americans.

Symbolic interactionists are not interested in large structures such as the government. As micro-sociologists, they are more interested in the face-to-face aspects of politics. In reality, much of politics consists of face-to-face backroom meetings and lobbyist efforts. What the public often sees is the front porch of politics that is sanitized by the media through gatekeeping.

Symbolic interactionists are most interested in the interaction between these small groups who make decisions, or in the case of some recent congressional committees, demonstrate the inability to make any decisions at all. The heart of politics is the result of interaction between individuals and small groups over periods of time. These meetings produce new meanings and perspectives that individuals use to make sure there are future interactions.

Summary

Sociologists use frameworks to gain perspective on data and observations related to the study of power and government. Functionalism suggests that societal power and structure is predicated on cooperation, interdependence, and shared goals or values. Conflict theory, rooted in Marxism, asserts that societal structures are the result of social groups competing for wealth and influence. Symbolic interactionism examines a smaller realm of sociological interest: the individual’s perception of symbols of power and their subsequent reaction to the face-to-face interactions of the political realm.

Further Research

Functionalism is a complex philosophical theory that pertains to a variety of disciplines beyond sociology. Visit the entry devoted to this intriguing topic on Stanford University’s *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* for a more comprehensive overview:
http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Stanford_functionalism

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Glossary

power elite
: a small group of powerful people who control much of a society

Introduction to Work and the Economy
class="introduction"

Today, structural mobility (the economic condition of the whole society) is determined, in great part, by stock prices, among other factors. (Photo courtesy of pixabay.com)

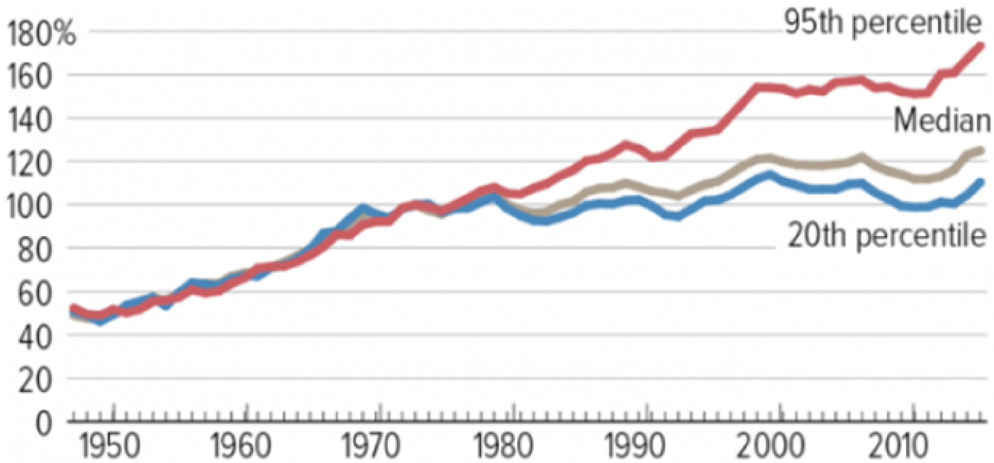
Economy refers to the system of producing and distributing food, goods, and serves. Even people in ancient times had "some process of production, consequently, an economy, which just as much constituted *the material basis* of their world, as bourgeois [capitalist] economy constitutes that of our modern world" (Marx 1867/1990). Throughout human history, the mode of economy, the very basic of the social condition, has been shifting from hunting and gathering to horticultural and pastoral, to agricultural, to industrial, and to postindustrial. As the mode of economy (or the material basis of the society) shifts, what people do and how they think cannot remain the same. (More about the mode of economy will be discussed later.)

Called "Primitive Communism," in the economic condition of hunting and gathering societies--according to Marx, Engels, and many other scholars--there was no inequality; the members maintained egalitarian social relations and common ownership, as opposed to personal properties. But as humans began producing food artificially by domesticating animals and plants, they became capable of producing more food than they consumed ("surplus food"). This condition helped yield personal properties, which had not existed in hunting and gathering societies, and because of which inequality

began growing, and, on the other hand, primitive communism began disappearing. Afterward? See below.

The Wage Gap in the United States

The Nonstop Growth of the Gap between the Poor and the Rich since 1981



Source: CBPP calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau Data

Overall

Census family income data show that from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, incomes across the income distribution grew at nearly the same pace (CBPP 2017). The figure above shows the level of real (inflation-adjusted) income at several points on the distribution relative to its 1973 level. It shows that real family income roughly doubled from the late 1940s to the early 1970s at the 95th percentile (the level of income of the top 5%), at the median (the level of income placed in the middle in the data), and at the 20th percentile (the level of income of the bottom 20%). Then, beginning in the 1970s, income disparities began to widen, with income growing much faster at the top of the ladder than in the middle or bottom.

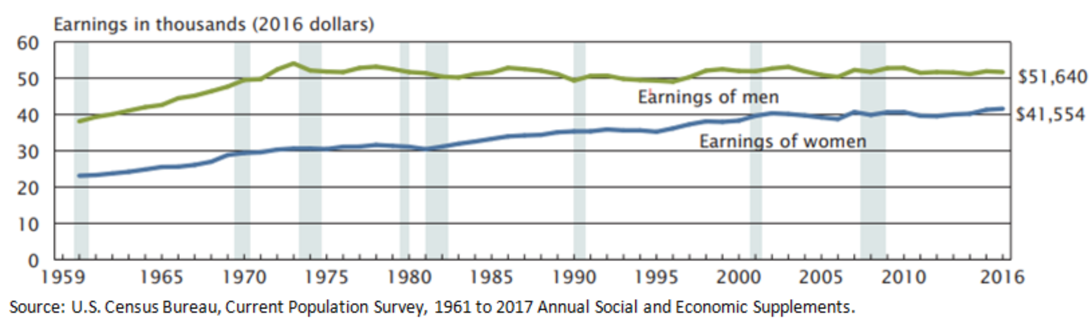
Especially notable in the figure is the nonstop growth of the gap between the poor and the rich after 1981, in which Ronald Reagan, a republican U.S. President, began lowering the tax rates for the rich significantly and, on the other hand, decided never to raise the minimum wage. Since then, millionaires were becoming billionaires, and the poor were left out

throughout. This trend kept growing regardless of who the president was. In 1993, Bill Clinton became the president, in 2001, George W. Bush, and in 2009, Barack Obama... See? The gap kept growing, regardless of whether the president was a democrat or republican.

Gender

The Equal Pay Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1963, was designed to reduce the wage gap between men and women, but this law is not working at all (see above). The act in essence required employers to pay equal wages to men and women for similar jobs. However, more than fifty years later, women continue to make less money than their male counterparts. According to a report released by the White House (National Equal Pay Taskforce 2013), “On average, full-time working women make just 77 cents for every dollar a man makes." In 2016, the gap between men and women in their median income was $10,096 ($51,640 minus $41,554). Oh yeah? Pretty much good income... Don't be jealous; they are full-timers having worked for 15 years or longer (see the title of the figure).

Median Earnings of Full-Time Workers 15 Years and Older by Sex: 1960 to 2016

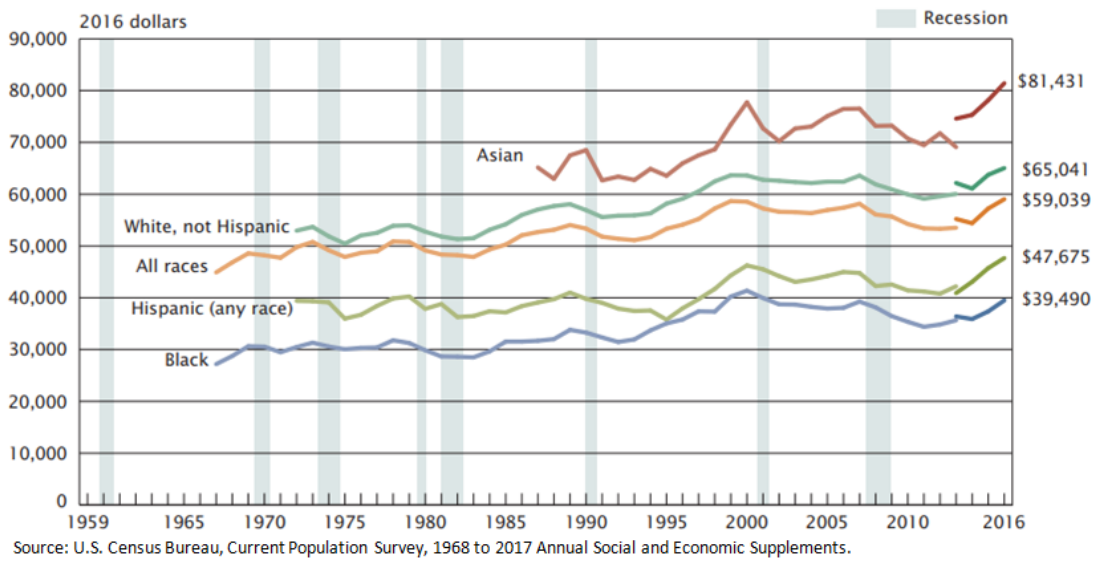


Race and Ethnicity

A comparison of income by race shows that Asian American households earn more than any other races including whites; this seems to be related, in part, to their education level. All other differences between races may also have resulted from this factor--plus "institutional racism" (see Ch. 7, Race and Ethnicity). The vertically drawn gray zones in the figure represent "recession." In each zone, the income levels for all races went down. The thick gray zone drawn between 2005 and 2010 is called the Great Recession that heavily damaged income of all races. In 2016, having recovered from

this, the median household income for all races went up to $59,039. Oh, don't be jealous; this is "household" income, not personal income. Still? Oh, yeah...

Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2016



Recent Economic Cconditions

In 2016, as shown above, the United States continued its recovery from the **Great Recession**, arguably the worst economic downturn since the stock market collapse in 1929 and the Great Depression that ensued. What caused this recession?

The recent recession was brought on, at least in part, by the lending practices of the early twenty-first century, known as **subprime loan**. During this time, banks offered adjustable-rate mortgages (ARM) to customers with poor credit histories for their purchase of houses at an attractively low introductory rate. After the introductory rate expired, the interest rate on these ARM loans rose, often dramatically, creating a sizable increase in the borrower’s monthly mortgage payments. As their rates adjusted upward, many of these "subprime loan" customers became unable to make their monthly payments and stopped doing so, known as defaulting. They gave up their houses, which banks confiscated and happily used for another

loans. Many, many banks repeated this. The massive rate of loan defaults, however, eventually put a strain on the financial institutions that had made the loans, and the inflated house-price bubble burst. What followed this was a series of bankruptcies of big financial institutions, such as Lehman Brothers.

As a terrible result, the United States, and the entire world too, fell into a period of high and prolonged unemployment, extreme reductions in wealth, stagnant wages, and loss of value in personal property (houses and land). The S&P 500 Index, which measures the overall share value of selected leading companies whose shares are traded on the stock market, fell from a high of 1565 in October 2007 to 676 by March 2009. Senator Bernie Sanders fiercely contends, "The reality is fraud in the business model of Wall Street... destroying the very fabric of our nation" (New York Times 2016).

The Economic Indicators
There are several economic indicators with which to measure the economic condition. They include unemployment rates, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), housing values, the stock market, and so on. To these economic indicators, another indicator was added in the end of the 1960s called **consumer confidence index**, owing to studies of a psychologist--not an economist.

It was Psychologist George Katona who developed the consumer confidence index. It measures “the degree of optimism on the state of the economy that consumers are expressing through their activities of savings and spending” (Katona 1951; cited in Lavrakas 2008). Using his own index, Katona became one of the few who accurately predicted the post-war boom in the U.S. Recall Thomas Theorem that suggests, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (see Ch. 5, Society and Social Interaction). The economy is a social reality, and social realities are, to a great extent, the product of people's subjective views on reality. Even if their views are wrong, they can become real in their consequences. Contrary to Katona's prediction, the mainstream economists right after World War II mistakenly warned that the economy would pit the bottom. People didn't care about this chilling analysis, and kept spending their

money, believing that "Thank God, it's good economy, and this will continue!" What Katona measured was this.

Today, having recovered from the Great Recession, unemployment rates are down in many areas of the United States, and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), housing prices, and the stock market are all up. This does not mean, however, that everybody enjoys this recovered economy in the same way. Many are, indeed, still struggling. Today, wealth is distributed inequitably at the top. Corporate profits have increased more than 141%, and CEO pay has risen by more than 298%.

The economic downturn had a rippling effect throughout the economy. For instance, it delivered a significant blow to the once-vibrant U.S. automotive industry. While consumers found loans harder to get due to the subprime mortgage lending crisis and increasing fuel costs, they also grew weary of large, gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles (SUVs) that were once the bread-and-butter product of U.S. automakers. As customers became more aware of the environmental impact of such cars and the cost of fuel, the large SUV ceased to be the status symbol it had been during the 1990s and 2000s. It became instead a symbol of excess and waste. All these factors created the perfect storm that nearly decimated the U.S. auto industry. To prevent mass job loss, the government provided emergency loans funded by taxpayer dollars, as well as other forms of financial support, to corporations like General Motors and Chrysler. While the companies survived, the landscape of the U.S. auto industry was changed as result of the economic decline.

To realign their businesses in the face of decreased sales and lower manufacturing outputs, many large automotive companies severed their ties with hundreds of dealerships, which affected the dealers' local economies around the country.

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Glossary

economy
: the social institution through which a society’s resources (goods and services) are managed

mechanical solidarity
: a form of social cohesion that comes from sharing similar work, education, and religion, as might be found in simpler societies

organic solidarity

a form of social cohesion that arises out of the mutual interdependence created by the specialization of work

Economic Systems

- Understand types of economic systems and their historical development
- Describe capitalism and socialism both in theory and in practice
- Discussion how functionalists, conflict theorists, and symbolic interactionists view the economy and work

The dominant economic systems of the modern era are capitalism and socialism (whose main characteristics will be compared below), but there have been many variations of economic sectors or modes. Many of these earlier systems lasted centuries--or even thousands of years. They include:

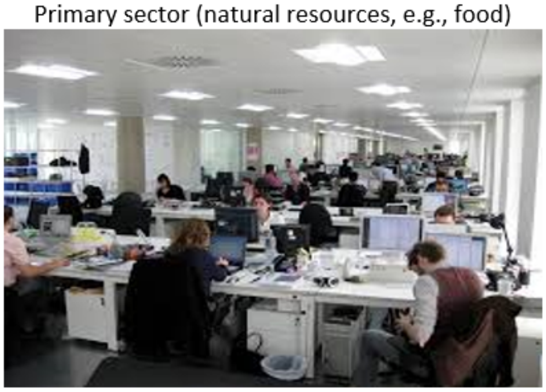
- Hunting and gathering;
- Horticultural and pastoral;
- Agricultural;
- Industrial; and
- Postindustrial.

The last three are also called, respectively, the primary sector (agricultural), the secondary sector (industrial), and the tertiary sector (postindustrial), as shown below. In the end of the twentieth century, one more sector has been added as the growth of the Internet helped create new forms of businesses based upon ideas and knowledge, namely, the quarternary sector.

Economic Sector (or Mode of Economy)

Primary sector (natural resources, e.g., food)

Secondary sector (manufacturing goods)



Tertiary sector (services, e.g., banking, insurance)

Quaternary sector (ideas and knowledge)

Economics of Agricultural, Industrial, and Postindustrial Societies

Our earliest ancestors lived as hunter-gatherers. Small groups of extended families roamed from place to place looking for food. They hunted animals for their meat and gathered wild fruits, vegetables, and cereals. Once the resources of an area ran low, the group had to move on, and everything they owned had to travel with them. Food reserves only consisted of what they could carry. Many sociologists contend that hunter-gatherers did not have a true economy, because groups did not typically trade with other groups due to the scarcity of goods.

Agricultural Societies

The first true economies emerged when people started raising crops and domesticating animals. It is important to note that agriculture began independently and at different times in several places around the world. The

earliest agriculture was in the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East around 11,000–10,000 years ago. Next were the valleys of the Indus, Yangtze, and Yellow rivers in India and China, between 10,000 and 9,000 years ago. The people living in the highlands of New Guinea developed agriculture between 9,000 and 6,000 years ago, while people were farming in Sub-Saharan Africa between 5,000 and 4,000 years ago. Agriculture developed later in the western hemisphere, arising in what would become the eastern United States, central Mexico, and northern South America between 5,000 and 3,000 years ago (Diamond 2003).

Agriculture began with the simplest of technologies—for example, a pointed stick to break up the soil—but really took off when people harnessed animals to pull an even more efficient tool for the same task: the plow. With this new technology, the way our ancestors produced food became more efficient. Surplus food grew, and so did the size of the society.

The improved efficiency in food production meant that not everyone had to toil all day in the fields. As agriculture grew, new jobs emerged, along with new technologies. Excess crops needed to be stored, processed, protected, and transported. Farming equipment and irrigation systems needed to be built and maintained. Wild animals needed to be domesticated and herds shepherded. Economies begin to develop because people now had goods and services to trade. At the same time, farmers eventually came to labor for the ruling class.

As more people specialized in nonfarming jobs, villages grew into towns and then into cities. Urban areas created the need for administrators and public servants. Disputes over ownership, payments, debts, compensation for damages, and the like led to the need for laws and courts—and the judges, clerks, lawyers, and police who administered and enforced those laws.

At first, most goods and services were traded as gifts or through bartering between small social groups (Mauss 1922). Exchanging one form of goods or services for another was known as **bartering**. This system only works when one person happens to have something the other person needs at the same time. To solve this problem, people developed the idea of a means of exchange that could be used at any time: that is, money. **Money** refers to an

object that a society agrees to assign a value to so it can be exchanged for payment. In early economies, money was often objects like cowry shells, rice, barley, or even rum. Precious metals quickly became the preferred means of exchange in many cultures because of their durability and portability. The first coins were minted in Lydia in what is now Turkey around 650–600 B.C.E. (Goldsborough 2010). Early legal codes established the value of money and the rates of exchange for various commodities. They also established the rules for inheritance, fines as penalties for crimes, and how property was to be divided and taxed (Horne 1915). A symbolic interactionist would note that bartering and money are systems of symbolic exchange. Monetary objects took on a symbolic meaning, one that carries into our modern-day use of cash, checks, and debit cards.

As city-states grew into countries and countries grew into empires, their economies grew as well. When large empires broke up, their economies broke up too. The governments of newly formed nations sought to protect and increase their markets. They financed voyages of discovery to find new markets and resources all over the world, which ushered in a rapid progression of economic development.

Colonies were established to secure these markets, and wars were financed to take over territory. These ventures were funded in part by raising capital from investors who were paid back from the goods obtained. Governments and private citizens also set up large trading companies that financed their enterprises around the world by selling stocks and bonds.

Governments tried to protect their share of the markets by developing a system called mercantilism. **Mercantilism** is an economic policy based on accumulating silver and gold by controlling colonial and foreign markets through taxes and other charges. The resulting restrictive practices and exacting demands included monopolies, bans on certain goods, high tariffs, and exclusivity requirements. Mercantilistic governments also promoted manufacturing and, with the ability to fund technological improvements, they helped create the equipment that led to the Industrial Revolution.

Industrial Societies

Until the end of the eighteenth century, most manufacturing was done by manual labor. This changed as inventors devised machines to manufacture goods. A small number of innovations led to a large number of changes in the British economy. In the textile industries, the spinning of cotton, worsted yarn, and flax could be done more quickly and less expensively using new machines with names like the Spinning Jenny and the Spinning Mule (Bond 2003). Another important innovation was made in the production of iron: Coke from coal could now be used in all stages of smelting rather than charcoal from wood, which dramatically lowered the cost of iron production while increasing availability (Bond 2003). James Watt ushered in what many scholars recognize as the greatest change, revolutionizing transportation and thereby the entire production of goods with his improved steam engine.

As people moved to cities to fill factory jobs, factory production also changed. Workers did their jobs in assembly lines and were trained to complete only one or two steps in the manufacturing process. These advances meant that more finished goods could be manufactured with more efficiency and speed than ever before.

The Industrial Revolution also changed agricultural practices. Until that time, many people practiced **subsistence farming** in which they produced only enough to feed themselves and pay their taxes. New technology introduced gasoline-powered farm tools such as tractors, seed drills, threshers, and combine harvesters. Farmers were encouraged to plant large fields of a single crop to maximize profits. With improved transportation and the invention of refrigeration, produce could be shipped safely all over the world.

The Industrial Revolution modernized the world. With growing resources came growing societies and economies. Between 1800 and 2000, the world’s population grew sixfold, while per capita income saw a tenfold jump (Maddison 2003).

While many people's lives were improving, the Industrial Revolution also birthed many societal problems. There were inequalities in the system. Owners amassed vast fortunes while laborers, including young children, toiled for long hours in unsafe conditions. Workers’ rights, wage protection,

and safe work environments are issues that arose during this period and remain concerns today.

Postindustrial Societies

Postindustrial societies, also known as information societies, have evolved in modernized nations. One of the most valuable goods of the modern era is information. Those who have the means to produce, store, and disseminate information are leaders in this type of society.

One way scholars understand the development of different types of societies (like agricultural, industrial, and postindustrial) is by examining their economies in terms of four sectors: primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary. Each has a different focus. The primary sector extracts and produces raw materials (like metals and crops). The secondary sector turns those raw materials into finished goods. The tertiary sector provides services: child care, healthcare, and money management. Finally, the quaternary sector produces ideas; these include the research that leads to new technologies, the management of information, and a society’s highest levels of education and the arts (Kenessey 1987).

In underdeveloped countries, the majority of the people work in the primary sector. As economies develop, more and more people are employed in the secondary sector. In well-developed economies, such as those in the United States, Japan, and Western Europe, the majority of the workforce is employed in service industries. In the United States, for example, almost 80 percent of the workforce is employed in the tertiary sector (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011).

The rapid increase in computer use in all aspects of daily life is a main reason for the transition to an information economy. Fewer people are needed to work in factories because computerized robots now handle many of the tasks. Other manufacturing jobs have been outsourced to less-developed countries as a result of the developing global economy. The growth of the Internet has created industries that exist almost entirely online. Within industries, technology continues to change how goods are

produced. For instance, the music and film industries used to produce physical products like CDs and DVDs for distribution. Now those goods are increasingly produced digitally and streamed or downloaded at a much lower physical manufacturing cost. Information and the means to use it creatively have become commodities in a postindustrial economy.

Capitalism vs. Socialism

When we compare capitalism and socialism, we need to be aware that we are comparing the concepts, not the contexts. **Concepts** are abstract ideas and **contexts**, tangible realities actually going on in front of our eyes. Although realities tend to grab our attention more powerfully, as they are made up of many noises other than pure concepts, we may be misled by them.

Here is an example of the difference between concepts and contexts. Assume you and some of your friends are interested in performing, say, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. So you guys group an orchestra, practice the symphony, and perform it at the BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center. But, just as predicted by many people, the way your orchestra performs is terrible. Now can your audience say, "Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 is terrible"? In this example, the symphony is a concept (the idea created by Beethoven), and your orchestra's performance is the context (the reality going on in the eye of your audience).

Hence, when we compare capitalism and socialism (the concepts), what's going on in the U.S. or that in China (the contexts) should be treated mostly as noises, not as pure ideas.

As shown below, the differences between capitalism and socialism can be summarized through the 3 major characteristics: (1) the ownership of the means of production, (2) who plans the economy, and (3) the main purpose of the economy. These are followed by examples of capitalism and socialism below.

3 Major Characteristics	Capitalism	Socialism
Ownership of the means of production	Private individuals	Government (public)
Who plans the economy	*Laissez-faire* (no one)--"free economy" under competition	Government--"planned economy" under cooperation
Main purpose	Profit	Welfare

Capitalism vs Socialism, by the 3 Major Characteristics

Examples

- **Capitalism**: entrepreneurship (running one's own business); giant corporations; privatization of prisons; deregulation of rail, truck, and air transportation; free trade accord (NAFTA, TPP…); globalization...
- **Socialism**: New Deal Policy; public schools; progressive taxation; labor unions; minimum wages; medicare, medicaid; consumer protection laws (FDA, FTC)...

Capitalism

There are several key words to understand what capitalism is like, at the top of which placed is "SUCCESS." (Courtesy of pixabay.com)

Capitalism is an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production, free economy, and profit motives. In principle, the government has nothing to do with this system. There's no regulation on any economic activities and protection for consumers. In reality, though, there's no country with 100% pure capitalism. Even the United States, which is considered the most capitalistic country, has many socialist policies, such as minimum wages, labor unions, public schools, medicare and medicaid, consumer protection laws, and so on.

Capitalism grew together with democracy as feudalism, based on aristocracy (or kingdom), lost its power for the raging waves of the Industrial Revolution. Prior to that, though, there had been political and philosophical thoughts that conceived this system. Among others, as aforementioned, Max Weber pointed to the Protestant work ethic that led to the spirit of capitalism.

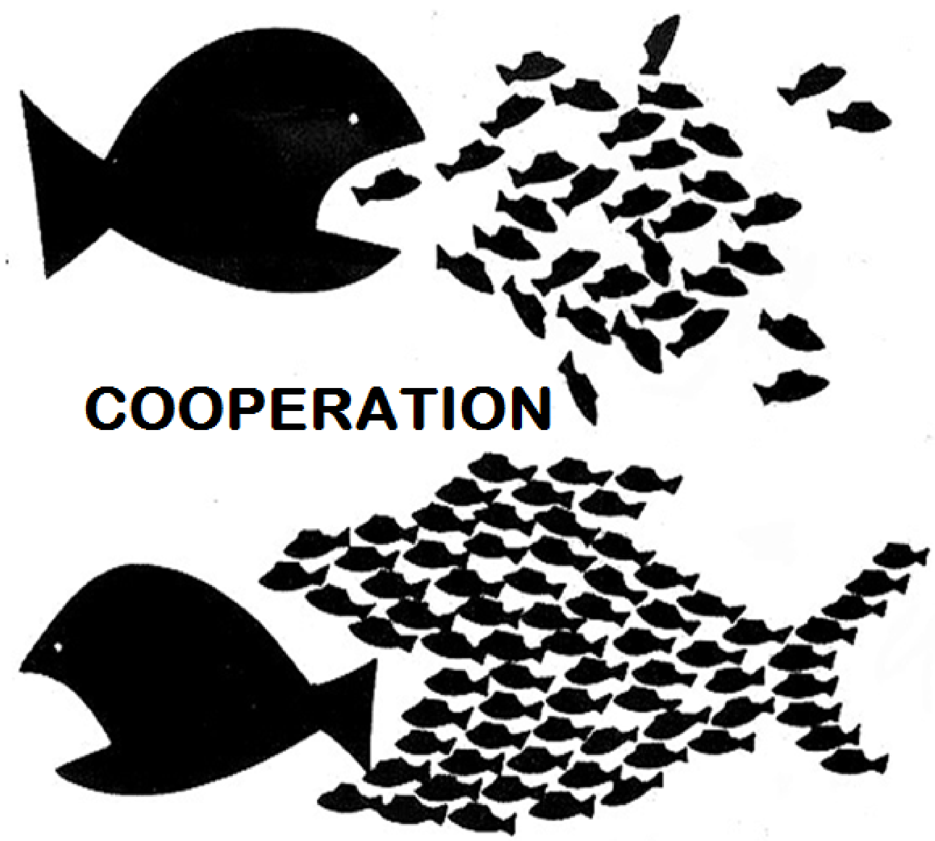
Equally important is the theory of the **invisible hand** offered by Adam Smith, a leading theorist of capitalism. He suggested that by pursuing your own interest, you frequently promote the society's interest more effectively, led by the invisible hand, than when you really intend to promote it (1976

[1776], pp. 363-64; paraphrased). By "invisible hand" (aka *laissez-faire*), he meant the economic mechanism based on "free competition" that automatically maintains the economic health without the government intervention. For a given product, that is, as a plural number of companies compete with each other, its quality should become better, and its price should become cheaper. This competition is for self-interest (or profit motives), but automatically promotes the society’s interest.

But critiques of this theory argue that Adam Smith, so preoccupied by political economy, carelessly disregarded such social psychological aspect of consumption as what sociologically oriented economist Thorstein Veblen (1899/1979) called "conspicuous consumption." For many people, Veblen suggested, consumption is not just about actual use but also about a means to displaying their social standings. For this reason, for the same quality, some of us tend to choose a more expensive product. Compare, for example, two t-shirts made of the same cotton, one of which is, say, adidas ($14.99), and the other, abibas ($4.99). Which would you choose?

The Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (2002) also argues, very cynically, that "the reason the invisible hand often was invisible was that it wasn’t there." Indeed, "many of the aspects of our inequality are a result of market failure."

Socialism



There are several key words to understand what socialism is like, at the center of which placed is "COOPERATION." (Courtesy of Worker Justice Wisconsin)

Socialism is an economic system in which there is government ownership (often referred to as "state run") of goods and their production, with an impetus to share work and wealth equally among the members of a society. Under socialism, everything that people produce, including services, is considered a social product. Everyone who contributes to the production of a good or to providing a service is entitled to a share in any benefits that come from its sale or use. To make sure all members of society get their fair share, governments must be able to control property, production, and distribution.

The focus in socialism is on benefitting society, whereas capitalism seeks to benefit the individual. Socialists claim that a capitalistic economy leads to inequality, with unfair distribution of wealth and individuals who use their power at the expense of society. Socialism strives, ideally, to control the economy to avoid the problems inherent in capitalism.

Within socialism, there are diverging views on the extent to which the economy should be controlled. One extreme believes all but the most personal items are public property. Other socialists believe only essential services such as healthcare, education, and utilities (electrical power, telecommunications, and sewage) need direct control. Under this form of socialism, farms, small shops, and businesses can be privately owned but are subject to government regulation. Just as there's no 100% pure capitalist country, there's no 100% pure socialist country, too, so far.

Because of challenges in their economies, several of these communist countries have moved from central planning to letting market forces help determine many production and pricing decisions. **Market socialism** describes a subtype of socialism that adopts certain traits of capitalism, like allowing limited private ownership or consulting market demands. This could involve situations like profits generated by a company going directly to the employees of the company or being used as public funds (Gregory and Stuart 2003). Many Eastern European and some South American countries have mixed economies. Key industries are nationalized and directly controlled by the government; however, most businesses are privately owned and regulated by the government.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Economy

Now that we've developed an understanding of the history and basic components of economies, let's turn to theory. How might social scientists study these topics? What questions do they ask? What theories do they develop to add to the body of sociological knowledge?

Functionalist Perspective

Someone taking a functional perspective will most likely view work and the economy as a well-oiled machine that is designed for maximum efficiency. The Davis-Moore thesis, for example, suggests that some social stratification is a social necessity. The need for certain highly skilled positions combined with the relative difficulty of the occupation and the

length of time it takes to qualify will result in a higher reward for that job and will provide a financial motivation to engage in more education and a more difficult profession (Davis and Moore 1945). This theory can be used to explain the prestige and salaries that go with careers only available to those with doctorates or medical degrees.

The functionalist perspective would assume that the continued health of the economy is vital to the health of the nation, as it ensures the distribution of goods and services. For example, we need food to travel from farms (high-functioning and efficient agricultural systems) via roads (safe and effective trucking and rail routes) to urban centers (high-density areas where workers can gather). However, sometimes a dysfunction—a function with the potential to disrupt social institutions or organization (Merton 1968)—in the economy occurs, usually because some institutions fail to adapt quickly enough to changing social conditions. This lesson has been driven home recently with the bursting of the housing bubble. Due to risky lending practices and an underregulated financial market, we are recovering from the after-effects of the Great Recession, which Merton would likely describe as a major dysfunction.

Some of this is cyclical. Markets produce goods as they are supposed to, but eventually the market is saturated and the supply of goods exceeds the demands. Typically the market goes through phases of surplus, or excess, inflation, where the money in your pocket today buys less than it did yesterday, and **recession**, which occurs when there are two or more consecutive quarters of economic decline. The functionalist would say to let market forces fluctuate in a cycle through these stages. In reality, to control the risk of an economic **depression** (a sustained recession across several economic sectors), the U.S. government will often adjust interest rates to encourage more lending—and consequently more spending. In short, letting the natural cycle fluctuate is not a gamble most governments are willing to take.

Conflict Perspective

For a conflict perspective theorist, the economy is not a source of stability for society. Instead, the economy reflects and reproduces economic inequality, particularly in a capitalist marketplace. The conflict perspective is classically Marxist, with the bourgeoisie (ruling class) accumulating wealth and power by exploiting and perhaps oppressing the proletariat (workers), and regulating those who cannot work (the aged, the infirm) into the great mass of unemployed (Marx and Engels 1848). From the symbolic (though probably made up) statement of Marie Antoinette, who purportedly said, “Let them eat cake” when told that the peasants were starving, to the Occupy Wall Street movement that began during the Great Recession, the sense of inequity is almost unchanged. Conflict theorists believe wealth is concentrated in the hands of those who do not deserve it. As of 2010, 20 percent of Americans owned 90 percent of U.S. wealth (Domhoff 2014). While the inequality might not be as extreme as in pre-revolutionary France, it is enough to make many believe that the United States is not the meritocracy it seems to be.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

Those working in the symbolic interaction perspective take a microanalytical view of society. They focus on the way reality is socially constructed through day-to-day interaction and how society is composed of people communicating based on a shared understanding of symbols.

One important symbolic interactionist concept related to work and the economy is **career inheritance**. This concept means simply that children tend to enter the same or similar occupation as their parents, which is a correlation that has been demonstrated in research studies (Antony 1998). For example, the children of police officers learn the norms and values that will help them succeed in law enforcement, and since they have a model career path to follow, they may find law enforcement even more attractive. Related to career inheritance is career socialization—learning the norms and values of a particular job.

Finally, a symbolic interactionist might study what contributes to job satisfaction. Melvin Kohn and his fellow researchers (1990) determined that

workers were most likely to be happy when they believed they controlled some part of their work, when they felt they were part of the decision-making processes associated with their work, when they have freedom from surveillance, and when they felt integral to the outcome of their work. Sunyal, Sunyal, and Yasin (2011) found that a greater sense of vulnerability to stress, the more stress experienced by a worker, and a greater amount of perceived risk consistently predicted a lower worker job satisfaction.

Summary

Economy refers to the social institution through which a society's resources (goods and services) are managed. The Agricultural Revolution led to development of the first economies that were based on trading goods. Mechanization of the manufacturing process led to the Industrial Revolution and gave rise to two major competing economic systems. Under capitalism, private owners invest their capital and that of others to produce goods and services they can sell in an open market. Prices and wages are set by supply and demand and competition. Under socialism, the means of production is commonly owned, and the economy is controlled centrally by government. Several countries' economies exhibit a mix of both systems. Convergence theory seeks to explain the correlation between a country's level of development and changes in its economic structure.

Further Research

Green jobs have the potential to improve not only your prospects of getting a good job, but the environment as well. To learn more about the green revolution in jobs go to http://openstaxcollege.org/l/greenjobs

One alternative to traditional capitalism is to have the workers own the company for which they work. To learn more about company-owned businesses check out: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/company-owned

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Glossary

bartering
: a process where people exchange one form of goods or services for another

capitalism
: an economic system in which there is private ownership (as opposed to state ownership) and where there is an impetus to produce profit, and thereby wealth

career inheritance
: a practice where children tend to enter the same or similar occupation as their parents

convergence theory
: a sociological theory to explain how and why societies move toward similarity over time as their economies develop

depression
: a sustained recession across several economic sectors

market socialism
: a subtype of socialism that adopts certain traits of capitalism, like allowing limited private ownership or consulting market demand

mercantilism
: an economic policy based on national policies of accumulating silver and gold by controlling markets with colonies and other countries through taxes and customs charges

money
: an object that a society agrees to assign a value to so it can be exchanged as payment

mutualism
: a form of socialism under which individuals and cooperative groups exchange products with one another on the basis of mutually satisfactory contracts

recession
: two or more consecutive quarters of economic decline

socialism

an economic system in which there is government ownership (often referred to as “state run”) of goods and their production, with an impetus to share work and wealth equally among the members of a society

subsistence farming
: farming where farmers grow only enough to feed themselves and their families

Globalization and the Economy

- Define globalization and describe its manifestation in modern society
- Discuss the pros and cons of globalization from an economic standpoint

Instant communications have allowed many international corporations to move parts of their businesses to countries where they can save lots of costs. (Photo courtesy of pixabay.com)

What Is Globalization?

Economists and politicians who support **globalization** explain it to be the process of integrating governments, cultures, and financial markets through international trade into a single world market. Opponents to it, however, point out the extremely uneven power balance between stronger nations (such as the U.S.) and weaker ones, arguing that it is a sophisticated form of colonialism.

When did it start?

Some maintain that the Industrial Revolution intertwined with the rise of capitalism was the breeding ground for globalization, while others point at the period of European colonialism that started during the era called the Age of Discovery (Rennen et al. 2003). The discovery of Americas by Columbus in 1492 was one of the major events that started colonialism.

Still another observe that it started when a Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping opened up China to the world during the late 1970s, and this "reform" boosted the country's gross domestic product (GDP) at an average annual rate of 9.6% starting in 1978 to reach $6 trillion in 2010 (e.g., Nathan et al. 2016). The "rise of China" as a global factory became possible because the mode of economy among core nations was coincidentally shifting from industrial to postindustrial. It is thus suggested that globalization is the division of labor on the global level, producing and distributing food (agricultural), goods (industrial), and services (postindustrial).

Who controls it?

Things going on under globalization are closely monitored and highhandedly controlled by such gigantic international organizations as IMF, World Bank, and WTO, all of which are run by the major developed nations, especially the U.S. The IMF, indeed, requires every country to get approval for its prospective economic policies. Nobel Price-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (2002), hence, points to the similar strategies for international dominance between the IMF methods and the gunboat diplomacy by Commodore Perry against Japan, the Opium War against China, and the like.

Globalization entails international trade, which basically entails tariffs (or taxes). In the post-World War II era, however, the U.S. has been promoting the idea of free trade, establishing GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) immediately followed by WTO (World Trade Organization). Such efforts eventually led to the North American Free Trade Agreement (**NAFTA**) in 1994. The agreement, signed by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, removes tariffs (taxes) and import laws that restrict international trade.

Many prominent economists and President Bill Clinton promised that NAFTA would lead to major gains in jobs for Americans. By 2010,

nonetheless, the evidence showed an opposite impact; 682,900 U.S. jobs lost across all states (Parks 2011) although NAFTA, on the other hand, helped giant corporations make much more profits than before.

There is a force powerfully pushing globalization, namely, **multinational corporations** that can control assets, production, and sales more efficiently through globalization (United Nations 1973). That is, globalization is tremendously profitable to multinational corporations; a large share of their capital is collected from a variety of nations, and their business is conducted without regard to national borders or regulations. Owing to globalization, hence, wealth can be concentrated in the hands of core nations and already wealthy individuals.

There is a rule in free trade agreements in general, known as "investor-to-state dispute settlement" (**ISDS**) (see AFL-CIO 2013). Foreign investors (i.e., giant corporations) can use this rule to challenge anything that negatively affects their business, such as food safety regulations, minimum wage increase, and so on. This rule seriously constrains governments' ability to protect people, or to say, can ruin their sovereignty.

For example, the Metalclad Corp., a U.S. waste disposal company, sued Mexico, after its project to open and operate a hazardous waste disposal facility was dismissed by the Mexican government; citizens had petitioned the government to block such project that would pollute the community's water supply. The ISDS panel found that Mexico had violated Metalclad's right to "fair and equitable treatment" under NAFTA. Metalclad won $15.6 million in this case. Under free trade agreements, corporate profits are considered more important than people's health.

We see the emergence of **global assembly lines**, where products are assembled over the course of several international transactions. For instance, Apple designs its next-generation Mac prototype in the United States, components are made in various peripheral nations, they are then shipped to another peripheral nation such as Malaysia for assembly, and tech support is outsourced to India.

Globalization has also led to the development of **global commodity chains**, where internationally integrated economic links connect workers and

corporations for the purpose of manufacture and marketing (Plahe 2005). For example, in *maquiladoras*, mostly found in northern Mexico, workers may sew imported precut pieces of fabric into garments.

Globalization also brings an international division of labor, in which comparatively wealthy workers from core nations compete with the low-wage labor pool of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. This can lead to a sense of **xenophobia**, which is an illogical fear and even hatred of foreigners and foreign goods. Corporations trying to maximize their profits in the United States are conscious of this risk and attempt to "Americanize" their products, selling shirts printed with U.S. flags that were nevertheless made in Mexico.

Summary

Globalization refers to the process of integrating governments, cultures, and financial markets through international trade into a single world market. There are benefits and drawbacks to globalization. Often the countries that fare the worst are those that depend on natural resource extraction for their wealth. Many critics fear globalization gives too much power to multinational corporations and that political decisions are influenced by these major financial players.

Further Research

The World Social Forum (WSF) was created in response to the creation of the World Economic Forum (WEF). The WSF is a coalition of organizations dedicated to the idea of a worldwide civil society and presents itself as an alternative to WEF, which it says is too focused on capitalism. To learn more about the WSF, check out http://openstaxcollege.org/l/WSF

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Glossary

global assembly lines
: a practice where products are assembled over the course of several international transactions

global commodity chains
: internationally integrated economic links that connect workers and corporations for the purpose of manufacture and marketing

xenophobia

an illogical fear and even hatred of foreigners and foreign goods

Work in the United States

- Describe the current U.S. workforce and the trend of polarization
- Explain how women and immigrants have changed the modern U.S. workforce
- Understand the basic elements of poverty in the United States today

Many people attend job fairs looking for their first job or for a better one. (Photo courtesy of Daniel Ramirez/flickr)

There is a great deal of mythology about hard work that is believed to help us climb to success. They say that if you study hard, develop good work habits, and graduate college, then you'll see what the American Dream really means. The reality, though, has always been more complex than suggested by the myth. When the society as a whole got into a deep recession, indeed, personal efforts alone wouldn't make a difference. In 2008, not just the U.S. but the entire world got into the Great Recession resulting from the disastrous failure of financial corporations' greedy strategy called the "subprime loan" (discussed above in this chapter). During this recession, more than 8 million U.S. workers lost their jobs, and unemployment rates surpassed 10% on a national level.

The Great Recession ended in several years. In 2017, the world economy kept growing, more rapidly than before. The New York Times (2018a) even wrote in January, that "Every one of the world's big economies is now growing," and "a synchronous wave of growth... is creating jobs"(2018). Stock prices, housing values, and GDP all keep going up and, on the other hand, unemployment rates, going down.

But then, again, by the end of 2018, stock prices suddenly began falling, globally. The New York Times (2018b), which just had frolicked in January of the same year, now gloomily wrote in December: "The stock market has wiped out its 2018 gains." Although economists analyze the situation this way or that way, let's not trust them; they were always wrong. One thing we can be sure is, though, that the world economy is now chaotic.

Proletariat (or ordinary workers) are always like the feather in the wind. That is, although many of them have got jobs owing to the swing back of the pendulum, when the chilly wind blows again, they might have to loose those jobs they've just got. In this section discussed are several factors that structurally affect such feather's (our) fate.

Several Factors That Structurally Affect the Feather's Fate

The mix of jobs available in the United States began changing many years before the recession struck, and, as mentioned above, the American Dream has not always been easy to achieve.

In the last several decades, the increased **outsourcing**—contracting a job or set of jobs to an outside source—of manufacturing jobs to developing nations has greatly diminished the number of high-paying, often unionized, blue-collar positions available. This trend started, as aforementioned, when China began inviting factories of big corporations, and this successful strategy is being followed by many other developing nations (Center for American Progress 2012).

The intent of big corporations for outsourcing is to take advantage of lower wages and operating costs. Manufacturing employment collapsed in the

U.S., for example, from a high of 19.5 million workers in 1979 to 11.5 million workers in 2009, a decrease by a near half.

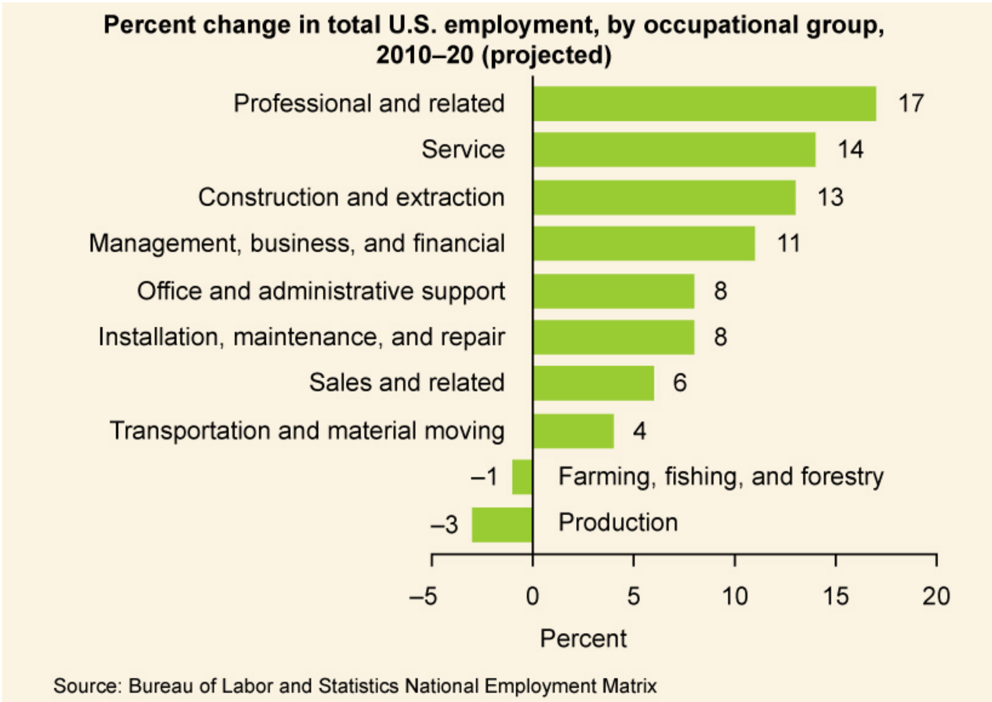
A similar problem has arisen in the white-collar sector, with many low-level clerical and support positions also being outsourced. The number of supervisory and managerial positions has been reduced. Even highly educated skilled workers such as computer programmers have seen their jobs vanish overseas.

The **automation** of the workplace, which replaces workers with technology, is another cause of the changes in the job market; corporations replace people with machines. People are protected by labor laws to some extent, but machines are not, at all.

Computers can be programmed to do many routine tasks faster and less expensively than people who used to do such tasks. Jobs like bookkeeping, clerical work, and repetitive tasks on production assembly lines all lend themselves to automation. Envision your local supermarket's self-scan checkout aisles. The automated cashiers affixed to the units take the place of paid employees. Now one cashier can oversee transactions at six or more self-scan aisles, which was a job that used to require one cashier per aisle.

Despite the ongoing economic recovery, the job market is actually growing in some areas, but in a very polarized fashion. At one end, there has been strong demand for low-skilled, low-paying jobs in industries like food service and retail. On the other end, research indicates that in certain fields there has been a steadily increasing demand for highly skilled and educated professionals, technologists, and managers. These high-skilled positions also tend to be highly paid (Autor 2010).

With so many jobs being outsourced or eliminated by automation, what kind of jobs are there a demand for in the United States? While fishing and forestry jobs are in decline, in several markets jobs are increasing. These include community and social service, personal care and service, finance, computer and information services, and healthcare. The chart below, from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, illustrates areas of projected growth.



This chart shows the projected growth of several occupational groups. (Graph courtesy of the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook)

The professional and related jobs, which include any number of positions, typically require significant education and training and tend to be lucrative career choices. Service jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, can include everything from jobs with the fire department to jobs scooping ice cream (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010). There is a wide variety of training needed, and therefore an equally large wage potential discrepancy. One of the largest areas of growth by industry, rather than by occupational group (as seen above), is in the health field. This growth is across occupations, from associate-level nurse’s aides to management-level assisted-living staff. As baby boomers age, they are living longer than any generation before, and the growth of this population segment requires an increase in capacity throughout our country’s elder care system, from home healthcare nursing to geriatric nutrition.

Notably, jobs in farming are in decline. This is an area where those with less education traditionally could be assured of finding steady, if low-wage, work. With these jobs disappearing, more and more workers will find themselves untrained for the types of employment that are available.

Another projected trend in employment relates to the level of education and training required to gain and keep a job. As the chart below shows us, growth rates are higher for those with more education. Those with a professional degree or a master’s degree may expect job growth of 20 and 22 percent respectively, and jobs that require a bachelor’s degree are projected to grow 17 percent. At the other end of the spectrum, jobs that require a high school diploma or equivalent are projected to grow at only 12 percent, while jobs that require less than a high school diploma will grow 14 percent. Quite simply, without a degree, it will be more difficult to find a job. It is worth noting that these projections are based on overall growth across all occupation categories, so obviously there will be variations within different occupational areas. However, once again, those who are the least educated will be the ones least able to fulfill the American Dream.

In the past, rising education levels in the United States had been able to keep pace with the rise in the number of education-dependent jobs. However, since the late 1970s, men have been enrolling in college at a lower rate than women, and graduating at a rate of almost 10 percent less. The lack of male candidates reaching the education levels needed for skilled positions has opened opportunities for women, minorities, and immigrants (Wang 2011).

Women in the Workforce

Women have been entering the workforce in ever-increasing numbers for several decades. They have also been finishing college and going on to earn higher degrees at higher rate than men do. This has resulted in many women being better positioned to obtain high-paying, high-skill jobs (Autor 2010).

While women are getting more and better jobs and their wages are rising more quickly than men's wages are, U.S. Census statistics show that they

are still earning only 77% of what men are for the same positions (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

Immigration and the Workforce

People migrate from places where there are few or no jobs to those where there are jobs. The joblessness is one of the major **push factors** for migration; it pushes people out of their homeland. Due to its reputation as the land of opportunity, the United States has long been the destination of all skill levels of workers.

Job opportunities are one of the major **pull factors**; they pull potential migrants. While the rate decreased somewhat during the economic slowdown of 2008, immigrants, both legal and illegal, continue to be a major part of the U.S. workforce.

In 2005, prior to the recession, immigrants made up a historic high of 14.7% of the workforce (Lowell et al. 2006). During the 1970s through 2000s, the United States experienced both an increase in college-educated immigrants and in immigrants who lacked a high school diploma. With this range across the spectrum, immigrants are well positioned for both the higher-paid jobs and the low-wage, low-skill jobs, which are predicted to grow in the next decade (ibid.).

In the early 2000s, it certainly seemed that the United States was continuing to live up to its reputation of opportunity. But what about during the recession of 2008, when so many jobs were lost and unemployment hovered close to 10%? How did immigrant workers fare then?

The answer is this. As of June 2009, when the recession officially ended, "foreign-born workers gained 656,000 jobs while native-born workers lost 1.2 million jobs" (Kochhar 2010). As these numbers suggest, the unemployment rate that year decreased for immigrant workers and increased for native workers. Some Pew research suggests immigrants tend to have greater flexibility to move from job to job and that the immigrant population may have been early victims of the recession, and thus were quicker to rebound (ibid.). Although the number of jobs increases,

immigrant earnings are in decline, and some theorize that increase in employment may come from a willingness to accept significantly low wages and bad working conditions.

Chronically unemployed people, including immigrants, are called in Marx's terminology, **reserve army of labor**, which is necessary to capitalists to exploit all laborers (Giddens 1971, p. 56). When economy becomes bad, they are the first to be easily laid off. When more workers are needed, they will be called back. And, as just mentioned above, they accept low wages and bad working conditions.

# of jobs to be filled (buyer = bourgeois)	**# of workers available (seller = proletariat)**	**working conditions, wages**
50	80	low
100	80	high
100	80 + reserve army of labor (40)	low

The Mechanism of "Labor Market"

In any markets, when the number of sellers is bigger than that of buyers, the price has to be lowered, and conversely, when the number of sellers is smaller than that of buyers, the price can go up. In the labor market, the same thing is happening; when the number of workers is bigger than that of the number of jobs, working conditions and wages have to be lowered, and conversely, when the number of workers is smaller than that of jobs, working conditions and wages can go up (see above). In order to avoid the latter case (good working conditions and wages), the government (the powerful friend of giant corporations) adds and maintains a large number of

chronically unemployed people, or immigrants (legal or illegal), called "reserve army of labor."

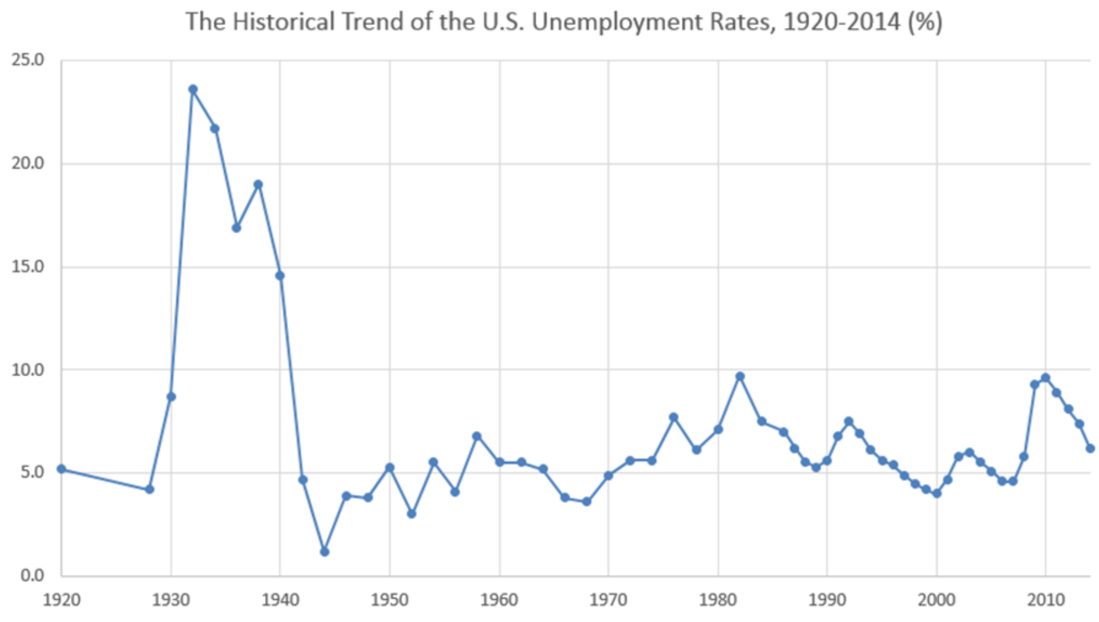
Unemployment in the United States

The **unemployment rate** announced by the government doesn't show us a clear picture related to unemployment in the country. It is calculated by this formula:

Unemployment rate = unemployed / entire labor force

When the size of "unemployed" (numerator) is big, the rate is high. Conversely, when it is small, the rate is low. For example, assume that the size of "entire labor force (denominator) is 100, and that of "unemployed" is 10. This results in 10%. But from 10, if the government excludes 5, it will result in 5%. Do they do it? Why?

The government officers actually exclude many from the "unemployed" for several reasons. First, they exclude "underemployment," that is, not fully employed but anyway employed (part timers) or skilled but doing unskilled jobs and paid way less than qualified. Second, they also exclude those who earned wages, however small, during a given period of time. Third, those who are not actively looking for a job in the past four weeks, for whatever the reason, are also excluded. As a result, many suggest, the unemployment rate announced by the government always looks rosier than what's actually going on.



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

There is great debate about how much support local, state, and federal governments should give to help the unemployed and underemployed. The decisions made on these issues will have a profound effect on working in the United States.

Is prolonged unemployment an effect of something, or a cause for something? Anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1965) argued that prolonged unemployment is an effect of **culture of poverty**, a set of traits observed among the poor who share remarkably similar family structure, time orientation, value systems, and spending patterns. By sharp contrast, Sociologist William Julius Wilson believes that prolonged unemployment causes many of today's problems in the inner-city ghetto neighborhoods, such as crime, family dissolution, female-headed families, and so on (1996-1997, p. 567; paraphrased). In another words, for Wilson, what Lewis called "culture of poverty" is the effect (or the result) of prolonged unemployment.

Summary

The job market in the United States is meant to be a meritocracy that creates social stratifications based on individual achievement. Economic forces, such as outsourcing and automation, are polarizing the workforce, with most job opportunities being either low-level, low-paying manual jobs

or high-level, high-paying jobs based on abstract skills. Women's role in the workforce has increased, although women have not yet achieved full equality. Immigrants play an important role in the U.S. labor market. The changing economy has forced more people into poverty even if they are working. Welfare, Social Security, and other social programs exist to protect people from the worst effects of poverty.

Further Research

The role of women in the workplace is constantly changing. To learn more, check out http://openstaxcollege.org/l/women_workplace

The Employment Projections Program of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics looks at a ten-year projection for jobs and employment. To see some trends for the next decade, check out http://openstaxcollege.org/l/BLS

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Glossary

automation
: workers being replaced by technology

outsourcing
: a practice where jobs are contracted to an outside source, often in another country

polarization
: a practice where the differences between low-end and high-end jobs become greater and the number of people in the middle levels decreases

structural unemployment
: a societal level of disjuncture between people seeking jobs and the jobs that are available

underemployment
: a state in which a person accepts a lower paying, lower status job than his or her education and experience qualifies him or her to perform

Collective Behavior

- Describe different forms of collective behavior
- Differentiate between types of crowds
- Discuss emergent norm, value-added, and assembling perspective analyses of collective behavior

Note:
Flash Mobs

Is this a good time had by all? Some flash mobs may function as political protests, while others are for fun. This flash mob pillow fight's purpose was to entertain. (Photo courtesy of Mattwi1S0n:/flickr)

In March 2014, a group of musicians got together in a fish market in Odessa for a spontaneous performance of Beethoven's “Ode to Joy” from his Ninth Symphony. While tensions were building over Ukraine's efforts to join the European Union, and even as Russian troops had taken control of the Ukrainian airbase in Belbek, the Odessa Philharmonic Orchestra and

Opera Chorus tried to lighten the troubled times for shoppers with music and song.
Spontaneous gatherings like this are called **flash mobs**. They often are captured on video and shared on the Internet; frequently they go viral. Humans seek connections and shared experiences. Perhaps experiencing a flash mob event enhances this bond. It certainly interrupts our otherwise mundane routine with a reminder that we are social animals.

Forms of Collective Behavior

Flash mobs are examples of **collective behavior**, noninstitutionalized activity in which several or many people voluntarily engage. Other examples are a group of commuters traveling home from work and a population of teens adopting a favorite singer's hairstyle. In short, collective behavior is any group behavior that is not mandated or regulated by an institution. There are three primary forms of collective behavior: the crowd, the mass, and the public.

When a large number of people share a physical space, such as the subway train, but do not share any interests or ideas together, they are called a **crowd** (Lofland 1993). When people share a common interest but do not share a physical space, such as players of the popular Facebook game Farmville, they are a **mass** (Lofland 1993). A **public** is an unorganized, relatively diffused group of people who share ideas, such as the Libertarian political party.

Theoretical Perspectives on Collective Behavior

Early collective behavior theories (LeBon 1895; Blumer 1969) focused on the irrationality of crowds. Eventually, those theorists who viewed crowds as uncontrolled groups of irrational people were supplanted by theorists who viewed the behavior some crowds engaged in as the rational behavior of logical beings.

Emergent-Norm Perspective

According to the emergent-norm perspective, Hurricane Katrina victims sought needed supplies for survival, but to outsiders their behavior would normally be seen as looting. (Photo courtesy of Infrogmation/Wikimedia Commons)

Sociologists Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1993) built on earlier sociological ideas and developed what is known as emergent norm theory. They believe that the norms experienced by people in a crowd may be disparate and fluctuating. They emphasize the importance of these norms in shaping crowd behavior, especially those norms that shift quickly in response to changing external factors. **Emergent norm theory** asserts that, in this circumstance, people perceive and respond to the crowd situation with their particular (individual) set of norms, which may change as the

crowd experience evolves. This focus on the individual component of interaction reflects a symbolic interactionist perspective.

For Turner and Killian, the process begins when individuals suddenly find themselves in a new situation, or when an existing situation suddenly becomes strange or unfamiliar. For example, think about human behavior during Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans was decimated and people were trapped without supplies or a way to evacuate. In these extraordinary circumstances, what outsiders saw as “looting” was defined by those involved as seeking needed supplies for survival. Normally, individuals would not wade into a corner gas station and take canned goods without paying, but given that they were suddenly in a greatly changed situation, they established a norm that they felt was reasonable.

Once individuals find themselves in a situation ungoverned by previously established norms, they interact in small groups to develop new guidelines on how to behave. According to the emergent-norm perspective, crowds are not viewed as irrational, impulsive, uncontrolled groups. Instead, norms develop and are accepted as they fit the situation. While this theory offers insight into why norms develop, it leaves undefined the nature of norms, how they come to be accepted by the crowd, and how they spread through the crowd.

Value-Added Theory

Neil Smelser’s (1962) meticulous categorization of crowd behavior, called **value-added theory,** is a perspective within the functionalist tradition based on the idea that several conditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur. Each condition adds to the likelihood that collective behavior will occur. The first condition is *structural conduciveness,* which occurs when people are aware of the problem and have the opportunity to gather, ideally in an open area. *Structural strain*, the second condition, refers to people’s expectations about the situation at hand being unmet, causing tension and strain. The next condition is the *growth and spread of a generalized belief*, wherein a problem is clearly identified and attributed to a person or group.

Fourth, *precipitating factors* spur collective behavior; this is the emergence of a dramatic event. The fifth condition is *mobilization for action*, when leaders emerge to direct a crowd to action. The final condition relates to action by the agents. Called *social control*, it is the only way to end the collective behavior episode (Smelser 1962).

A real-life example of these conditions occurred after the fatal police shooting of teenager Michael Brown, an unarmed eighteen-year-old African American, in Ferguson, MO on August 9, 2014. The shooting drew national attention almost immediately. A large group of mostly black, local residents assembled in protest—a classic example of structural conduciveness. When the community perceived that the police were not acting in the people's interest and were withholding the name of the officer, structural strain became evident. A growing generalized belief evolved as the crowd of protesters were met with heavily armed police in military-style protective uniforms accompanied by an armored vehicle. The precipitating factor of the arrival of the police spurred greater collective behavior as the residents mobilized by assembling a parade down the street. Ultimately they were met with tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets used by the police acting as agents of social control. The element of social control escalated over the following days until August 18, when the governor called in the National Guard.

Agents of social control bring collective behavior to an end. (Photo courtesy of hozinja/flickr)

Assembling Perspective

Interactionist sociologist Clark McPhail (1991) developed **assembling perspective,** another system for understanding collective behavior that credited individuals in crowds as rational beings. Unlike previous theories, this theory refocuses attention from collective behavior to collective action. Remember that collective behavior is a noninstitutionalized gathering, whereas collective action is based on a shared interest. McPhail's theory focused primarily on the processes associated with crowd behavior, plus the lifecycle of gatherings. He identified several instances of convergent or collective behavior, as shown on the chart below.

Type of crowd	**Description**	**Example**
Convergence clusters	Family and friends who travel together	Carpooling parents take several children to the movies
Convergent orientation	Group all facing the same direction	A semi-circle around a stage

Type of crowd	Description	Example
Collective vocalization	Sounds or noises made collectively	Screams on a roller coaster
Collective verbalization	Collective and simultaneous participation in a speech or song	Pledge of Allegiance in the school classroom
Collective gesticulation	Body parts forming symbols	The YMCA dance
Collective manipulation	Objects collectively moved around	Holding signs at a protest rally
Collective locomotion	The direction and rate of movement to the event	Children running to an ice cream truck

Clark McPhail identified various circumstances of convergent and collective behavior (McPhail 1991).

As useful as this is for understanding the components of how crowds come together, many sociologists criticize its lack of attention on the large cultural context of the described behaviors, instead focusing on individual actions.

Summary

Collective behavior is noninstitutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage. There are three different forms of collective behavior: crowd, mass, and public. There are three main theories on collective behavior. The first, the emergent-norm perspective, emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behavior. The next, the value-added theory, is a functionalist perspective that states that several preconditions

must be in place for collective behavior to occur. Finally the assembling perspective focuses on collective action rather than collective behavior, addressing the processes associated with crowd behavior and the lifecycle and various categories of gatherings.

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Glossary

acting crowds
: crowds of people who are focused on a specific action or goal

assembling perspective
: a theory that credits individuals in crowds as behaving as rational thinkers and views crowds as engaging in purposeful behavior and collective action

casual crowds

people who share close proximity without really interacting

collective behavior
a noninstitutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage

conventional crowds
people who come together for a regularly scheduled event

crowd
a fairly large number of people who share close proximity

emergent norm theory
a perspective that emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behavior

expressive crowds
crowds who share opportunities to express emotions

flash mob
a large group of people who gather together in a spontaneous activity that lasts a limited amount of time

mass
a relatively large group with a common interest, even if they may not be in close proximity

public
an unorganized, relatively diffuse group of people who share ideas

value-added theory
a functionalist perspective theory that posits that several preconditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur

Social Movements

- Demonstrate awareness of social movements on a state, national, and global level
- Distinguish between different types of social movements
- Identify stages of social movements
- Discuss theoretical perspectives on social movements, like resource mobilization, framing, and new social movement theory

Social movements can be defined as organized actions taken through groupings of individuals and/or organizations that may empower ordinary people to change existing social/political structures (see, e.g., Deric 2011). While most of us learned about social movements in history classes, we tend to take for granted the fundamental changes they caused as if they were naturally "given" rather than socially or politically "gotten."

Called **reification**, this is the tendency that people view the social reality going on at the macro level to be "beyond their control" (Ritzer 2010, p. 59), as if they were hurricanes or earthquakes. Notice, however, that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was not "given," but "gotten" through a series of social movements known as the civil rights movement. Social movements can bear fruit if, and *only if*, a large number of people support them.

Levels of Social Movements

Movements happen in our towns, in our nation, and around the world. Let’s take a look at examples of social movements, from local to global. No doubt you can think of others on all of these levels, especially since modern technology has allowed us a near-constant stream of information about the quest for social change around the world.

Local

Chicago is a city of highs and lows, from corrupt politicians and failing schools to innovative education programs and a thriving arts scene. Not surprisingly, it has been home to a number of social movements over time.

Currently, AREA Chicago is a social movement focused on “building a socially just city” (AREA Chicago 2011). The organization seeks to “create relationships and sustain community through art, research, education, and activism” (AREA Chicago 2011). The movement offers online tools like the Radicalendar—a calendar for getting radical and connected—and events such as an alternative to the traditional Independence Day picnic. Through its offerings, AREA Chicago gives local residents a chance to engage in a movement to help build a socially just city.

State

Texas Secede! is an organization which would like Texas to secede from the United States. (Photo courtesy of Tim Pearce/flickr)

At the other end of the political spectrum from AREA Chicago is the Texas Secede! social movement in Texas. This statewide organization promotes the idea that Texas can and should secede from the United States to become an independent republic. The organization, which as of 2014 has over 6,000 “likes” on Facebook, references both Texas and national history in

promoting secession. The movement encourages Texans to return to their rugged and individualistic roots, and to stand up to what proponents believe is the theft of their rights and property by the U.S. government (Texas Secede! 2009).

National

A polarizing national issue that has helped spawn many activist groups is gay marriage. While the legal battle is being played out state by state, the issue is a national one.

The Human Rights Campaign, a nationwide organization that advocates for LGBT civil rights, has been active for over thirty years and claims more than a million members. One focus of the organization is its Americans for Marriage Equality campaign. Using public celebrities such as athletes, musicians, and political figures, it seeks to engage the public in the issue of equal rights under the law. The campaign raises awareness of the over 1,100 different rights, benefits, and protections provided on the basis of marital status under federal law and seeks to educate the public about why these protections should be available to all committed couples regardless of gender (Human Rights Campaign 2014).

A movement on the opposite end is the National Organization for Marriage, an organization that funds campaigns to stop same-sex marriage (National Organization for Marriage 2014). Both these organizations work on the national stage and seek to engage people through grassroots efforts to push their message. In February 2011, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder released a statement saying President Barack Obama had concluded that "due to a number of factors, including a documented history of discrimination, classification based on sexual orientation should be subject to a more heightened standard of scrutiny." The statement said, "Section 3 of DOMA [the Defense of Marriage Act of 1993], as applied to legally married same-sex couples, fails to meet that standard and is therefore unconstitutional." With that the Department was instructed not to defend the statute in such cases (Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs 2011; AP/Huffington Post 2011).

Global

Social organizations worldwide take stands on such general areas of concern as poverty, sex trafficking, and the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in food. **Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** (NGOs) are formed to support or lead such movements. They are nonprofit and supported by donations. Greenpeace, an internationally coordinating organization whose main focus is placed on environmental issues, is an example.

Types of Social Movements

We know that social movements can occur on the local, national, or even global stage. Are there other patterns or classifications that can help us understand them? Sociologist David Aberle (1966) addresses this question by developing categories that distinguish among social movements based on what they want to change and how much change they want.

Reform movements seek to change or modify something specific about the social structure. Examples include antinuclear groups, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the Dreamers movement for immigration reform, and the Human Rights Campaign's advocacy for Marriage Equality.

Revolutionary movements seek to completely overturn the existing social/political structure. There were two major revolutions that were ignited by the Industrial Revolution. One is the American Revolution, through which the U.S. got the independence from Britain and the other, the French Revolution, for which feudalism in entire Europe began collapsing.

Although the civil rights movement in the 1960s brought great changes in the U.S., as it didn't overturn the existing government, strictly saying, it's not considered to be a revolution. If the south (or Confederate) won the American Civil War and took over the U.S. government, that would have been a revolution--although it would have been a hell-like nightmare.

Proactive social movements promote social changes. If the American Civil War were considered a movement, it would have been a proactive social

movement, as it aimed at the abolition of slavery. **Reactive social movements** try to push back the situation, which has been changed, to the previous condition. The enactment of a series of the Jim Crow laws by White Southerners immediately after the Civil War is an example (see Ch. 7, Race and Ethnicity). It was to segregate ex-slaves emancipated after the war. The laws continued to be enforced until the latter half of the twentieth century.

Another examples of "proactive social movements" related to the Jim Crow laws include: the lawsuits called *Brown v Board of Education* of 1954, which cleanly knocked down the laws' insistence, "separate but equal"; the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the product of the civil rights movement, that banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin in employment practices and public accommodations. Recently, though, a series of reactions to the proactive movements are taken by the so-called white supremacists, reactions which can be understood as an example of "reactive social movements."

Stages of Social Movements

Later sociologists studied the lifecycle of social movements—how they emerge, grow, and in some cases, die out. Blumer (1969) and Tilly (1978) outline a four-stage process. In the *preliminary stage*, people become aware of an issue, and leaders emerge. This is followed by the *coalescence stage* when people join together and organize in order to publicize the issue and raise awareness. In the *institutionalization stage*, the movement no longer requires grassroots volunteerism: it is an established organization, typically with a paid staff. When people fall away and adopt a new movement, the movement successfully brings about the change it sought, or when people no longer take the issue seriously, the movement falls into the *decline stage*. Each social movement discussed earlier belongs in one of these four stages. Where would you put them on the list?

Note:
Social Media and Social Change: A Match Made in Heaven

In 2008, Obama's campaign used social media to tweet, like, and friend its way to victory. (Photo courtesy of bradleyolin/flickr)

Chances are you have been asked to tweet, friend, like, or donate online for a cause. Maybe you were one of the many people who, in 2010, helped raise over $3 million in relief efforts for Haiti through cell phone text donations. Or maybe you follow presidential candidates on Twitter and retweet their messages to your followers. Perhaps you have "liked" a local nonprofit on Facebook, prompted by one of your neighbors or friends liking it too. Nowadays, social movements are woven throughout our social media activities. After all, social movements start by activating people.

Referring to the ideal type stages discussed above, you can see that social media has the potential to dramatically transform how people get involved. Look at stage one, the *preliminary stage*: people become aware of an issue, and leaders emerge. Imagine how social media speeds up this step. Suddenly, a shrewd user of Twitter can alert his thousands of followers about an emerging cause or an issue on his mind. Issue awareness can spread at the speed of a click, with thousands of people across the globe becoming informed at the same time. In a similar vein, those who are savvy and engaged with social media emerge as leaders. Suddenly, you don't need to be a powerful public speaker. You don't even need to leave

your house. You can build an audience through social media without ever meeting the people you are inspiring.

At the next stage, the *coalescence stage*, social media also is transformative. Coalescence is the point when people join together to publicize the issue and get organized. President Obama's 2008 campaign was a case study in organizing through social media. Using Twitter and other online tools, the campaign engaged volunteers who had typically not bothered with politics and empowered those who were more active to generate still more activity. It is no coincidence that Obama's earlier work experience included grassroots community organizing. What is the difference between his campaign and the work he did in Chicago neighborhoods decades earlier? The ability to organize without regard to geographical boundaries by using social media. In 2009, when student protests erupted in Tehran, social media was considered so important to the organizing effort that the U.S. State Department actually asked Twitter to suspend scheduled maintenance so that a vital tool would not be disabled during the demonstrations.

So what is the real impact of this technology on the world? Did Twitter bring down Mubarak in Egypt? Author Malcolm Gladwell (2010) doesn't think so. In an article in *New Yorker* magazine, Gladwell tackles what he considers the myth that social media gets people more engaged. He points out that most of the tweets relating to the Iran protests were in English and sent from Western accounts (instead of people on the ground). Rather than increasing engagement, he contends that social media only increases participation; after all, the cost of participation is so much lower than the cost of engagement. Instead of risking being arrested, shot with rubber bullets, or sprayed with fire hoses, social media activists can click "like" or retweet a message from the comfort and safety of their desk (Gladwell 2010).

There are, though, good cases to be made for the power of social media in propelling social movements. In the article, "Parrhesia and Democracy: Truth-telling, WikiLeaks and the Arab Spring," Theresa Sauter and Gavin Kendall (2011) describe the importance of social media in the Arab Spring uprisings. Parrhesia means "the practice of truth-telling," which describes the protestors' use of social media to make up for the lack of coverage and even misrepresentation of events by state-controlled media. The Tunisian blogger Lina Ben Mhenni posted photographs and videos on Facebook and

Twitter of events exposing the violence committed by the government. In Egypt the journalist Asmaa Mahfouz used Facebook to gather large numbers of people in Tahrir Square in the capital city of Cairo. Sauter and Kendall maintain that it was the use of Web 2.0 technologies that allowed activists not only to share events with the world but also to organize the actions.

When the Egyptian government shut down the Internet to stop the use of social media, the group Anonymous, a hacking organization noted for online acts of civil disobedience initiated "Operation Egypt" and sent thousands of faxes to keep the public informed of their government's activities (CBS Interactive Inc. 2014) as well as attacking the government's web site (Wagensiel 2011). In its Facebook press release the group stated the following: "Anonymous wants you to offer free access to uncensored media in your entire country. When you ignore this message, not only will we attack your government websites, Anonymous will also make sure that the international media sees the horrid reality you impose upon your people."

Sociologists have identified high-risk activism, such as the civil rights movement, as a “strong-tie” phenomenon, meaning that people are far more likely to stay engaged and not run home to safety if they have close friends who are also engaged. The people who dropped out of the movement—who went home after the danger got too great—did not display any less ideological commitment. But they lacked the strong-tie connection to other people who were staying. Social media, by its very makeup, is “weak-tie” (McAdam and Paulsen 1993). People follow or friend people they have never met. But while these online acquaintances are a source of information and inspiration, the lack of engaged personal contact limits the level of risk we’ll take on their behalf.

After a devastating earthquake in 2010, Twitter and the Red Cross raised millions for Haiti relief efforts through phone donations alone. (Photo courtesy of Cambodia4KidsOrg/flickr)

Theoretical Perspectives on Social Movements

Most theories of social movements are called collective action theories, indicating the purposeful nature of this form of collective behavior. The following three theories are but a few of the many classic and modern theories developed by social scientists.

Resource Mobilization

McCarthy and Zald (1977) conceptualize **resource mobilization theory** as a way to explain movement success in terms of the ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals. Resources are primarily time and money, and the more of both, the greater the power of organized movements. Numbers of social movement organizations (SMOs), which are single social movement groups, with the same goals constitute a social

movement industry (SMI). Together they create what McCarthy and Zald (1977) refer to as "the sum of all social movements in a society."

Resource Mobilization and the Civil Rights Movement

The civil rights movement had existed well before **Rosa Parks** refused to give up her bus seat to a white man. What happened was this. In Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, Rosa Parks was sitting in the "colored section" of the bus, but as the whites-only section was filled, the bus driver asked her to give up her seat for a white passenger, which she refused (!). This violated the Jim Crow laws, which required colored people in such situation to give up their seat for whites, and thus, Rosa was arrested and fined $10 (!). What would you do if you were her?

Rosa Parks' disobedience to the Jim Crow laws triggered the Montgomery bus boycott, which eventually led to the civil rights movement. She was later called "the first lady of civil rights" (Schmitz 2014). Less known than this is that she was a member of the NAACP (see below) and trained in leadership (A&E Television Networks, LLC. 2014). But her action that day was spontaneous and unplanned (ibid.).

During these events, **Martin Luther King Jr.** who led the enormous momentum toward the civil rights movement became the charismatic leader. It is important to note that a large number of whites supported the movement. Initially, major newspapers reported the movement as racial riots and war against the white population, but television news programs began showing violence and discrimination practiced by whites (e.g., police) against blacks (William 2004). Having watched what it was actually like, 75,000 whites joined 250,000 protesters marching in Washington in 1963 (Issel 1985, p. 181). They followed white folk singer Joan Baez singing “We shall overcome,” and heard Martin Luther King Jr. describe his dream of racial equality and announce that “we will not be satisfied until justice rolls.”

Many social movement organizations grew and joined the existing ones. Although the movement in that period was an overall success, and laws

were proactively changed, the "movement" still continues in order to fight reactive movements. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court has recently weakened the Voter Rights Act of 1965, once again making it more difficult for African Americans and other minorities to vote.

Founded in 1909, one of the most important social movement organizations, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (**NAACP**), has been fighting racism. Its mission today is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic *equality* of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based *discrimination* (NAACP 2018). The same old? Yes, the relationship between the proactive and reactive movements is like the pendulum swinging back and forth... As the reactive movements persist, the proactive movements keep combating with them.

Framing/Frame Analysis

Over the past several decades, sociologists have developed the concept of frames to explain how individuals identify and understand social events and which norms they should follow in any given situation (Goffman 1974; Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000). Imagine entering a restaurant. Your "frame" immediately provides you with a behavior template. It probably does not occur to you to wear pajamas to a fine-dining establishment, throw food at other patrons, or spit your drink onto the table. However, eating food at a sleepover pizza party provides you with an entirely different behavior template. It might be perfectly acceptable to eat in your pajamas and maybe even throw popcorn at others or guzzle drinks from cans.

Successful social movements use three kinds of frames (Snow and Benford 1988) to further their goals. The first type, **diagnostic framing**, states the problem in a clear, easily understood way. When applying diagnostic frames, there are no shades of gray: instead, there is the belief that what "they" do is wrong and this is how "we" will fix it. The anti-gay marriage movement is an example of diagnostic framing with its uncompromising insistence that marriage is only between a man and a woman. **Prognostic framing**, the second type, offers a solution and states how it will be

implemented. Some examples of this frame, when looking at the issue of marriage equality as framed by the anti-gay marriage movement, include the plan to restrict marriage to "one man/one woman" or to allow only "civil unions" instead of marriages. As you can see, there may be many competing prognostic frames even within social movements adhering to similar diagnostic frames. Finally, **motivational framing** is the call to action: what should you do once you agree with the diagnostic frame and believe in the prognostic frame? These frames are action-oriented. In the gay marriage movement, a call to action might encourage you to vote "no" on Proposition 8 in California (a move to limit marriage to male-female couples), or conversely, to contact your local congressperson to express your viewpoint that marriage should be restricted to male-female couples.

With so many similar diagnostic frames, some groups find it best to join together to maximize their impact. When social movements link their goals to the goals of other social movements and merge into a single group, a **frame alignment process** (Snow et al. 1986) occurs—an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to the movement.

This frame alignment process has four aspects: bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation. *Bridging* describes a "bridge" that connects uninvolved individuals and unorganized or ineffective groups with social movements that, though structurally unconnected, nonetheless share similar interests or goals. These organizations join together to create a new, stronger social movement organization. Can you think of examples of different organizations with a similar goal that have banded together?

In the *amplification* model, organizations seek to expand their core ideas to gain a wider, more universal appeal. By expanding their ideas to include a broader range, they can mobilize more people for their cause. For example, the Slow Food movement extends its arguments in support of local food to encompass reduced energy consumption, pollution, obesity from eating more healthfully, and more.

In *extension,* social movements agree to mutually promote each other, even when the two social movement organization's goals don't necessarily relate to each other's immediate goals. This often occurs when organizations are

sympathetic to each others’ causes, even if they are not directly aligned, such as women’s equal rights and the civil rights movement.

Extension occurs when social movements have sympathetic causes. Women’s rights, racial equality, and LGBT advocacy are all human rights issues. (Photos (a) and (b) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Photo (c) courtesy of Charlie Nguyen/flickr)

Transformation means a complete revision of goals. Once a movement has succeeded, it risks losing relevance. If it wants to remain active, the

movement has to change with the transformation or risk becoming obsolete. For instance, when the women’s suffrage movement gained women the right to vote, members turned their attention to advocating equal rights and campaigning to elect women to office. In short, transformation is an evolution in the existing diagnostic or prognostic frames that generally achieves a total conversion of the movement.

New Social Movement Theory

New social movement theory, a development of European social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s, attempts to explain the proliferation of postindustrial and postmodern movements that are difficult to analyze using traditional social movement theories. Rather than being one specific theory, it is more of a perspective that revolves around understanding movements as they relate to politics, identity, culture, and social change. Some of these more complex interrelated movements include ecofeminism, which focuses on the patriarchal society as the source of environmental problems, and the transgender rights movement. Sociologist Steven Buechler (2000) suggests that we should be looking at the bigger picture in which these movements arise—shifting to a macro-level, global analysis of social movements.

The Movement to Legalize Marijuana

The early history of marijuana in the United States includes its use as an over-the-counter medicine as well as various industrial applications. Its recreational use eventually became a focus of regulatory concern. Public opinion, swayed by a powerful propaganda campaign by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics in the 1930s, remained firmly opposed to the use of marijuana for decades. In the 1936 church-financed propaganda film "Reefer Madness," marijuana was portrayed as a dangerous drug that caused insanity and violent behavior.

One reason for the recent shift in public attitudes about marijuana, and the social movement pushing for its decriminalization, is a more-informed understanding of its effects that largely contradict its earlier

characterization. The public has also become aware that penalties for possession have been significantly disproportionate along racial lines. U.S. Census and FBI data reveal that blacks in the United States are between two to eight times more likely than whites to be arrested for possession of marijuana (Urbina 2013; Matthews 2013). Further, the resulting incarceration costs and prison overcrowding are causing states to look closely at decriminalization and legalization.

In 2012, marijuana was legalized for recreational purposes in Washington and Colorado through ballot initiatives approved by voters. While it remains a Schedule One controlled substance under federal law, the federal government has indicated that it will not intervene in state decisions to ease marijuana laws.

Summary

Social movements are purposeful, organized groups, either with the goal of pushing toward change, giving political voice to those without it, or gathering for some other common purpose. Social movements intersect with environmental changes, technological innovations, and other external factors to create social change. There are a myriad of catalysts that create social movements, and the reasons that people join are as varied as the participants themselves. Sociologists look at both the macro- and microanalytical reasons that social movements occur, take root, and ultimately succeed or fail.

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Glossary

alternative movements
: social movements that limit themselves to self-improvement changes in individuals

diagnostic framing
: a the social problem that is stated in a clear, easily understood manner

frame alignment process
: using bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation as an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to a

movement

motivational framing
a call to action

new social movement theory
a theory that attempts to explain the proliferation of postindustrial and postmodern movements that are difficult to understand using traditional social movement theories

NGO
nongovernmental organizations working globally for numerous humanitarian and environmental causes

prognostic framing
social movements that state a clear solution and a means of implementation

reform movements
movements that seek to change something specific about the social structure

religious/redemptive movements
movements that work to promote inner change or spiritual growth in individuals

resistance movements
those who seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure

resource mobilization theory
a theory that explains social movements’ success in terms of their ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals

revolutionary movements
movements that seek to completely change every aspect of society

social movement industry

the collection of the social movement organizations that are striving toward similar goals

social movement organization
a single social movement group

social movement sector
the multiple social movement industries in a society, even if they have widely varying constituents and goals

social movement
a purposeful organized group hoping to work toward a common social goal

Social Change

- Explain how technology, social institutions, population, and the environment can bring about social change
- Discuss the importance of modernization in relation to social change

Collective behavior and social movements are just two of the forces driving **social change**, which is the change in society created through social movements as well as external factors like environmental shifts or technological innovations. Essentially, any disruptive shift in the status quo, be it intentional or random, human-caused or natural, can lead to social change. Below are some of the likely causes.

Causes of Social Change

Changes to technology, social institutions, population, and the environment, alone or in some combination, create change. Below, we will discuss how these act as agents of social change, and we'll examine real-world examples. We will focus on four agents of change that social scientists recognize: technology, social institutions, population, and the environment.

The Darker Side of Technology: Electronic Aggression in the Information Age

The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) uses the term "electronic aggression" to describe "any type of harassment or bullying that occurs through e-mail, a chat room, instant messaging, a website (including blogs), or text messaging" (CDC, n.d.) We generally think of this as cyberbullying. A 2011 study by the U.S. Department of Education found that 27.8 percent of students aged twelve through eighteen reported experiencing bullying. From the same sample 9 percent specifically reported having been a victim of cyberbullying (Robers et al. 2013).

Cyberbullying represents a powerful change in modern society. William F. Ogburn (1922) might have been describing it nearly a century ago when he defined "cultural lag," which occurs when material culture precedes

nonmaterial culture. That is, society may not fully comprehend all the consequences of a new technology and so may initially reject it (such as stem cell research) or embrace it, sometimes with unintended negative consequences (such as pollution).

Cyberbullying is a special feature of the Internet. Unique to electronic aggression is that it can happen twenty-four hours a day, every day; it can reach a child (or an adult) even though she or he might otherwise feel safe in a locked house. The messages and images may be posted anonymously and to a very wide audience, and they might even be impossible to trace. Finally, once posted, the texts and images are very hard to delete. Its effects range from the use of alcohol and drugs to lower self-esteem, health problems, and even suicide (CDC, n.d.).

Note:

The Story of Megan Meier

According to the Megan Meier Foundation web site (2014a), Megan Meier had a lifelong struggle with weight, attention deficit disorder, and depression. But then a sixteen-year-old boy named Josh Evans asked Megan, who was thirteen years old, to be friends on the social networking web site MySpace. The two began communicating online regularly, though they never met in person or spoke on the phone. Now Megan finally knew a boy who, she believed, really thought she was pretty.

But things changed, according to the Megan Meier Foundation web site (2014b). Josh began saying he didn’t want to be friends anymore, and the messages became cruel on October 16, 2006, when Josh concluded by telling Megan, “The world would be a better place without you.” The cyberbullying escalated when additional classmates and friends on MySpace began writing disturbing messages and bulletins. That night Megan hanged herself in her bedroom closet, three weeks before what would have been her fourteenth birthday.

According to an ABC News article titled, "Parents: Cyber Bullying Led to Teen's Death" (2007), it was only later that a neighbor informed Megan’s parents that Josh was not a real person. Instead, “Josh’s” account was created by the mother of a girl who used to be friends with Megan.

You can find out more of Megan's story at her mother's web site: http://www.meganmeierfoundation.org/

Social Institutions

Each change in a single social institution leads to changes in all social institutions. For example, the industrialization of society meant that there was no longer a need for large families to produce enough manual labor to run a farm. Further, new job opportunities were in close proximity to urban centers where living space was at a premium. The result is that the average family size shrunk significantly.

This same shift toward industrial corporate entities also changed the way we view government involvement in the private sector, created the global economy, provided new political platforms, and even spurred new religions and new forms of religious worship like Scientology. It has also informed the way we educate our children: originally schools were set up to accommodate an agricultural calendar so children could be home to work the fields in the summer, and even today, teaching models are largely based on preparing students for industrial jobs, despite that being an outdated need. A shift in one area, such as industrialization, means an interconnected impact across social institutions.

The Environment

Turning to human ecology, we know that individuals and the environment affect each other. As human populations move into more vulnerable areas, we see an increase in the number of people affected by natural disasters, and we see that human interaction with the environment increases the impact of those disasters. Part of this is simply the numbers: the more people there are on the planet, the more likely it is that some will be affected by a natural disaster.

But it goes beyond that. Movements like 350.org describe how we have already seen five extinctions of massive amounts of life on the planet, and the crisis of global change has put us on the verge of yet another. According to their website, "The number 350 means climate safety: to preserve a livable planet, scientists tell us we must reduce the amount of CO_2 in the atmosphere from its current level of 400 parts per million to below 350 ppm" (350.org).

The environment is best described as an ecosystem, one that exists as the interplay of multiple parts including 8.7 million species of life. However dozens of species are going extinct every day, a number 1,000 times to 10,000 times the normal "background rate" and the highest rate since the dinosaurs disappeared 65 million years ago. The Center for Biological Diversity states that this extinction crisis, unlike previous ones caused by natural disasters, is "caused almost entirely by us” (Center for Biological Diversity, n.d.). The growth of the human population, currently over seven billion and expected to rise to nine or ten billion by 2050, perfectly correlates with the rising extinction rate of life on earth.

Note:

Hurricane Katrina: When It All Comes Together

The four key elements that affect social change that are described in this chapter are the environment, technology, social institutions, and population. In 2005, New Orleans was struck by a devastating hurricane. But it was not just the hurricane that was disastrous. It was the converging of all four of these elements, and the text below will connect the elements by putting the words in parentheses.

Before Hurricane Katrina (environment) hit, poorly coordinated evacuation efforts had left about 25 percent of the population, almost entirely African Americans who lacked private transportation, to suffer the consequences of the coming storm (demographics). Then "after the storm, when the levees broke, thousands more [refugees] came. And the city buses, meant to take them to proper shelters, were underwater" (Sullivan 2005). No public transportation was provided, drinking water and communications were delayed, and FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency

(institutions), was headed by an appointee with no real experience in emergency management. Those who were eventually evacuated did not know where they were being sent or how to contact family members. African Americans were sent the farthest from their homes. When the displaced began to return, public housing had not been reestablished, yet the Superdome stadium, which had served as a temporary disaster shelter, had been rebuilt. Homeowners received financial support, but renters did not.

As it turns out, it was not entirely the hurricane that cost the lives of 1,500 people, but the fact that the city's storm levees (technology), which had been built too low and which failed to meet numerous other safety specifications, gave way, flooding the lower portions of the city, occupied almost entirely by African Americans.

Journalist Naomi Klein, in her book The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, presents a theory of a "triple shock," consisting of an initial disaster, an economic shock that replaces public services with private (for-profit) ones, and a third shock consisting of the intense policing of the remaining public. Klein supports her claim by quoting then-Congressman Richard Baker as saying, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did." She quotes developer Joseph Canizaro as stating, "I think we have a clean sheet to start again. And with that clean sheet we have some very big opportunities." One clean sheet was that New Orleans began to replace public schools with charters, breaking the teachers' union and firing all public school teachers (Mullins 2014). Public housing was seriously reduced and the poor were forced out altogether or into the suburbs far from medical and other facilities (The Advocate 2013). Finally, by relocating African Americans and changing the ratio of African Americans to whites, New Orleans changed its entire demographic makeup.

Modernization--and Postmodernism

Modernization describes the processes that increase the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies resulting in the move from an undeveloped society to a developed, technologically driven

society (Irwin 1975). By this definition, the level of modernity within a society is judged by the sophistication of its technology, particularly as it relates to infrastructure, industry, and the like. However, it is important to note the inherent ethnocentric (or Eurocentric) bias of such assessment.

Why do we assume that those living in semi-peripheral or peripheral nations would find it so wonderful to become more like the core nations in terms of how they are related to one another? Is the way business people living in big cities are related to others, such as friends and families, necessarily better than that farmers in small folk villages are related to others? Is modernization always positive?

Yes, in terms of technologies, modernization is definitely positive. Really? There are many counterarguments against this, though. For example, Sigmund Freud (1989 [1961]), in his *Civilization and Its Discontent*, keenly albeit cynically argued that:

> If there had been no railway to conquer distances, my child would never have left his native town and I should need no telephone to hear his voice; if traveling across the ocean by ship had not been introduced, my friend would not have embarked on his sea-voyage and I should not need a cable to relieve my anxiety about him. (Freud 1989 [1961], p. 40)

In the early twentieth century, some scholars began arguing against modernization--similarly to, but more seriously than, Freud. Behind this loom were the end of colonialism, the uprising of women, the revolt of other cultures against white Western hegemony (Flax 1990, p. 5). Their ideas are called **postmodernism**, “a philosophy that has reached strongly against several assumptions of modernity, namely, those concerning progress, history, causality, system, absolutes, meaning, the unitary self, technological judgment, and conformity” (Glass 1993, p. 1).

A feminist in support for postmodernism argues that the “inherent connections Enlightenment [or modernist] thinkers posited between science, progress, and happiness appear disturbingly ironic when we contemplate Hiroshima, Auschwitz, or the possibility of a ‘nuclear winter’” (Flax 1990, p. 8). According to postmodernists, modernization centers

around male thinking, or to say, rich white men's ideologies. It ended, they argue, and it was a failure; it didn't make humans happy.

Recall that sociology "was born" because of the great social changes, i.e., modernization triggered by the Industrial Revolution. This means that sociology is essentially about modernization. To be noted, though, sociology is not a science that supports modernization, but is the one that studies issues resulting from the social changes. Therefore, it's very important to understand counterarguments against modernization, such as postmodernism.

Summary

There are numerous and varied causes of social change. Four common causes, as recognized by social scientists, are technology, social institutions, population, and the environment. All four of these areas can impact when and how society changes. And they are all interrelated: a change in one area can lead to changes throughout. Modernization is a typical result of social change. Modernization refers to the process of increased differentiation and specialization within a society, particularly around its industry and infrastructure. While this assumes that more modern societies are better, there has been significant pushback on this western-centric view that all peripheral and semi-peripheral countries should aspire to be like North America and Western Europe.

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Glossary

crowdsourcing
: the process of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people

modernization
: the process that increases the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies

social change

the change in a society created through social movements as well as through external factors like environmental shifts or technological innovations

Introduction to Health and Medicine
class="introduction"

Medical personnel are at the front lines of extremely dangerous work. Personal protective clothing is essential for any health worker entering an infection zone, as shown by these trainees for the UK's National Health Service. (Photo courtesy of DFID - UK Department for International Development/flickr)

According to the World Health Organization and ABC Health News, on March 19, 2014 a "mystery" hemorrhagic fever outbreak occurred in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This outbreak was later confirmed to be Ebola, a disease first discovered in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. The 2014 outbreak started a chain reaction in West Africa, sickening more than 8,000 people and leaving more than 4,000 dead by October.

At the time of this writing, Ebola is national news in the United States, and certainly global news as well. Infection of U.S. medical staff (both in West Africa and at home) has led to much fear and distrust, and discussion of restrictions on flights from West Africa was one proposed way to stop the spread of the disease. Ebola first entered the United States via U.S. missionary medical staff who were infected in West Africa and then transported home for treatment. The case of Thomas Eric Duncan, who unwittingly imported Ebola into the United States as he flew from Liberia to Texas in September 2014 to visit family, increased the level of fear.

How do we best respond to this horrific virus? Restrict visitors from West Africa, enhance training and protective gear for all U.S. medical workers and law enforcement? Many concerns surround this disease and few agree

upon the appropriate response. You can follow the progression of the outbreak at http://abc7news.com/news/timeline-of-the-ebola-virus-in-america-/348789/.

The Ebola case brings many issues to the forefront. Are we in the cross-hairs of a large-scale Ebola epidemic in the United States? Or are the few cases of infection (primarily of health professionals) as far as the disease will spread in the United States? In the short term, how do we best prevent, identify, and treat current and potential cases?

The sociology of health encompasses social epidemiology, disease, mental health, disability, and medicalization. The way that we perceive health and illness is in constant evolution. As we learn to control existing diseases, new diseases develop. As our society evolves to be more global, the way that diseases spread evolves with it.

What does “health” mean to you? Do you believe that there are too many people taking medications in U.S. society? Are you skeptical about people claiming they are “addicted” to gambling or “addicted” to sex? Can you think of anything that was historically considered a disease but is now considered within a range of normality? Or anything that has recently become known as a disease that before was considered evidence of laziness or other character flaws? Do you believe all children should receive vaccinations? These are questions examined in the sociology of health.

Sociologists may also understand these issues more fully by considering them through one of the main theoretical perspectives of the discipline. The functionalist perspective is a macroanalytical perspective that looks at the big picture and focuses on the way that all aspects of society are integral to the continued health and viability of the whole. For those working within the functionalist perspective, the focus is on how healthy individuals have the most to contribute to the stability of society. Functionalists might study the most efficient way to restore “sick” individuals to a healthy state. The conflict perspective is another macroanalytical perspective that focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality. Someone applying the conflict perspective might focus on inequalities within the health system itself, by looking at disparities in race, ethnicity, gender, and age. Someone applying the interactionist perspective to health might focus on how people

understand their health, and how their health affects their relationships with the people in their lives.

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The Social Construction of Health

- Define the term medical sociology
- Understand the difference between the cultural meaning of illness, the social construction of illness, and the social construction of medical knowledge

If sociology is the systematic study of human behavior in society, **medical sociology** is the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and healthcare for both the sick and the healthy. Medical sociologists study the physical, mental, and social components of health and illness. Major topics for medical sociologists include the doctor/patient relationship, the structure and socioeconomics of healthcare, and how culture impacts attitudes toward disease and wellness.

The social construction of health is a major research topic within medical sociology. At first glance, the concept of a social construction of health does not seem to make sense. After all, if disease is a measurable, physiological problem, then there can be no question of socially constructing disease, right? Well, it's not that simple. The idea of the social construction of health emphasizes the socio-cultural aspects of the discipline's approach to physical, objectively definable phenomena. Sociologists Conrad and Barker (2010) offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the major findings of the last fifty years of development in this concept. Their summary categorizes the findings in the field under three subheadings: the cultural meaning of illness, the social construction of the illness experience, and the social construction of medical knowledge.

The Cultural Meaning of Illness

Many medical sociologists contend that illnesses have both a biological and an experiential component, and that these components exist independently of each other. Our culture, not our biology, dictates which illnesses are stigmatized and which are not, which are considered disabilities and which are not, and which are deemed contestable (meaning some medical professionals may find the existence of this ailment questionable) as

opposed to definitive (illnesses that are unquestionably recognized in the medical profession) (Conrad and Barker 2010).

For instance, sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) described how social stigmas hinder individuals from fully integrating into society. In essence, Goffman suggests we might view illness as a stigma that can push others to view the ill in an undesirable manner. The **stigmatization of illness** often has the greatest effect on the patient and the kind of care he/she receives. Many contend that our society and even our healthcare institutions discriminate against certain diseases—like mental disorders, AIDS, venereal (genital) diseases, and skin disorders (Sartorius 2007). Facilities for these diseases may be sub-par; they may be segregated from other healthcare areas or relegated to a poorer environment. The stigma may keep people from seeking help for their illness, making it worse than it needs to be.

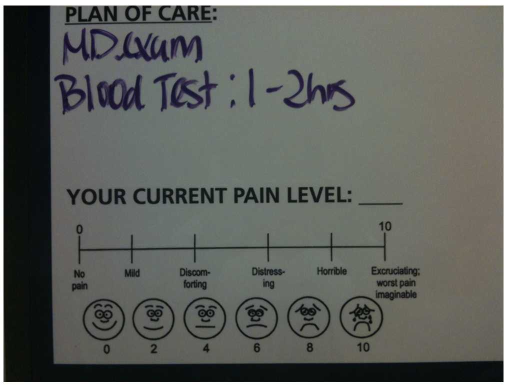
The Social Construction of the Illness Experience

The idea of the social construction of the illness experience is based on the concept of reality as a social construction. In other words, there is no objective reality; there are only our own perceptions of it. The social construction of the illness experience deals with such issues as the way some patients control the manner in which they reveal their diseases and the lifestyle adaptations patients develop to cope with their illnesses.

In terms of constructing the illness experience, culture and individual personality both play a significant role. For some people, a long-term illness can have the effect of making their world smaller, more defined by the illness than anything else. For others, illness can be a chance for discovery, for re-imaging a new self (Conrad and Barker 2007). Culture plays a huge role in how an individual experiences illness. Widespread diseases like AIDS or breast cancer have specific cultural markers that have changed over the years and that govern how individuals—and society—view them.

Today, many institutions of wellness acknowledge the degree to which individual perceptions shape the nature of health and illness. Regarding physical activity, for instance, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

recommends that individuals use a standard level of exertion to assess their physical activity. This Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) gives a more complete view of an individual's actual exertion level, since heartrate or pulse measurements may be affected by medication or other issues (Centers for Disease Control 2011a). Similarly, many medical professionals use a comparable scale for perceived pain to help determine pain management strategies.



The Mosby pain rating scale helps health care providers assess an individual's level of pain. What might a symbolic interactionist observe about this method? (Photo courtesy of wrestlingentropy/flickr)

The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge

Conrad and Barker show how medical knowledge is socially constructed; that is, it can both reflect and reproduce inequalities in gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Conrad and Barker (2011) use the example of the social construction of women's health and how medical knowledge has changed

significantly in the course of a few generations. For instance, in the early nineteenth century, pregnant women were discouraged from driving or dancing for fear of harming the unborn child, much as they are discouraged, with more valid reason, from smoking or drinking alcohol today.

Note:

Has Breast Cancer Awareness Gone Too Far?

Pink ribbons are a ubiquitous reminder of breast cancer. But do pink ribbon chocolates do anything to eradicate the disease? (Photo courtesy of wishuponacupcake/Wikimedia Commons)

Every October, the world turns pink. Football and baseball players wear pink accessories. Skyscrapers and large public buildings are lit with pink lights at night. Shoppers can choose from a huge array of pink products. In 2014, people wanting to support the fight against breast cancer could purchase any of the following pink products: KitchenAid mixers, Master Lock padlocks and bike chains, Wilson tennis rackets, Fiat cars, and Smith & Wesson handguns. You read that correctly. The goal of all these pink products is to raise awareness and money for breast cancer. However, the relentless creep of pink has many people wondering if the pink marketing juggernaut has gone too far.

Pink has been associated with breast cancer since 1991, when the Susan G. Komen Foundation handed out pink ribbons at its 1991 Race for the Cure event. Since then, the pink ribbon has appeared on countless products, and then by extension, the color pink has come to represent support for a cure of the disease. No one can argue about the Susan G. Komen Foundation’s mission—to find a cure for breast cancer—or the fact that the group has raised millions of dollars for research and care. However, some people question if, or how much, all these products really help in the fight against breast cancer (Begos 2011).

The advocacy group Breast Cancer Action (BCA) position themselves as watchdogs of other agencies fighting breast cancer. They accept no funding from entities, like those in the pharmaceutical industry, with potential profit connections to this health industry. They’ve developed a trademarked “Think Before You Pink” campaign to provoke consumer questioning of the end contributions made to breast cancer by companies hawking pink wares. They do not advise against “pink” purchases; they just want consumers to be informed about how much money is involved, where it comes from, and where it will go. For instance, what percentage of each purchase goes to breast cancer causes? BCA does not judge how much is enough, but it informs customers and then encourages them to consider whether they feel the amount is enough (Think Before You Pink 2012).

BCA also suggests that consumers make sure that the product they are buying does not actually *contribute* to breast cancer, a phenomenon they call “pinkwashing.” This issue made national headlines in 2010, when the Susan G. Komen Foundation partnered with Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) on a promotion called “Buckets for the Cure.” For every bucket of grilled or regular fried chicken, KFC would donate fifty cents to the Komen Foundation, with the goal of reaching 8 million dollars: the largest single donation received by the foundation. However, some critics saw the partnership as an unholy alliance. Higher body fat and eating fatty foods has been linked to increased cancer risks, and detractors, including BCA, called the Komen Foundation out on this apparent contradiction of goals. Komen’s response was that the program did a great deal to raise awareness in low-income communities, where Komen previously had little outreach (Hutchison 2010).

What do you think? Are fundraising and awareness important enough to trump issues of health? What other examples of “pinkwashing” can you think of?

Summary

Medical sociology is the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and healthcare for both the sick and the healthy. The social construction of health explains how society shapes and is shaped by medical ideas.

Further Research

Spend some time on the two web sites below. How do they present differing views of the vaccination controversy? Freedom of Choice is Not Free: Vaccination News: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/vaccination_news and Shot by Shot: Stories of Vaccine-Preventable Illnesses: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/shot_by_shot

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Glossary

contested illnesses
: illnesses that are questioned or considered questionable by some medical professionals

medical sociology
: the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and healthcare for both the sick and the healthy

stigmatization of illness

illnesses that are discriminated against and whose sufferers are looked down upon or even shunned by society

Global Health

- Define social epidemiology
- Apply theories of social epidemiology to an understanding of global health issues
- Understand the differences between high-income and low-income nations

Social epidemiology focuses on how different social conditions are related to different types of diseases. The health problems of core nations, indeed, differ greatly from those of peripheral nations. For example, some diseases, like cancer, are universal. But others, like obesity, heart disease, respiratory disease, and diabetes are much more common in core (high-income) nations than in peripheral (low-income) nations. Core nations also have a higher incidence of depression (Bromet et al. 2011). In contrast, peripheral nations suffer significantly from malaria and tuberculosis.

How does health differ around the world? Some theorists differentiate among three types of countries: core nations, semi-peripheral nations, and peripheral nations. Core nations are those that we think of as highly developed or industrialized, semi-peripheral nations are those that are often called developing or newly industrialized, and peripheral nations are those that are relatively undeveloped. While the most pervasive issue in the U.S. healthcare system is affordable access to healthcare, other core countries have different issues, and semi-peripheral and peripheral nations are faced with a host of additional concerns. Reviewing the status of global health offers insight into the various ways that politics and wealth shape access to healthcare, and it shows which populations are most affected by health disparities.

Health in Core Nations

Obesity, which is on the rise in high-income nations, has been linked to many diseases, including cardiovascular problems, musculoskeletal problems, diabetes, and respiratory issues. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2011), obesity rates are rising in all countries, with the greatest gains being made in the highest-income

countries. The United States has the highest obesity rate. Wallace Huffman and his fellow researchers (2006) contend that several factors are contributing to the rise in obesity in developed countries:

1. Improvements in technology and reduced family size have led to a reduction of work to be done in household production.
2. Unhealthy market goods, including processed foods, sweetened drinks, and sweet and salty snacks are replacing home-produced goods.
3. Leisure activities are growing more sedentary, for example, computer games, web surfing, and television viewing.
4. More workers are shifting from active work (agriculture and manufacturing) to service industries.
5. Increased access to passive transportation has led to more driving and less walking.

Obesity and weight issues have significant societal costs, including lower life expectancies and higher shared healthcare costs.

High-income countries also have higher rates of depression than less affluent nations. A recent study (Bromet et al. 2011) shows that the average lifetime prevalence of major depressive episodes in the ten highest-income countries in the study was 14.6 percent; this compared to 11.1 percent in the eight low- and middle-income countries. The researchers speculate that the higher rate of depression may be linked to the greater income inequality that exists in the highest-income nations.

Health in Peripheral Nations

In low-income countries, malnutrition and lack of access to clean water contribute to a high child mortality rate. (Photo courtesy of Steve Evans/flickr)

In peripheral nations with low per capita income, it is not the cost of healthcare that is the most pressing concern. Rather, low-income countries must manage such problems as infectious disease, high infant mortality rates, scarce medical personnel, and inadequate water and sewer systems. Such issues, which high-income countries rarely even think about, are central to the lives of most people in low-income nations. Due to such health concerns, low-income nations have higher rates of infant mortality and lower average life spans.

One of the biggest contributors to medical issues in low-income countries is the lack of access to clean water and basic sanitation resources. According to a 2014 UNICEF report, almost half of the developing world's population lacks improved sanitation facilities. The World Health Organization (WHO) tracks health-related data for 193 countries. In their 2011 World Health Statistics report, they document the following statistics:

1. Globally, the rate of mortality for children under five was 60 per 1,000 live births. In low-income countries, however, that rate is almost double at 117 per 1,000 live births. In high-income countries, that rate is significantly lower than seven per 1,000 live births.
2. The most frequent causes of death for children under five were pneumonia and diarrheal diseases, accounting for 18 percent and 15 percent, respectively. These deaths could be easily avoidable with cleaner water and more coverage of available medical care.
3. The availability of doctors and nurses in low-income countries is one-tenth that of nations with a high income. Challenges in access to medical education and access to patients exacerbate this issue for

would-be medical professionals in low-income countries (World Health Organization 2011).

Further Research

Study this map on global life expectancies: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/global_life_expectancies. What trends do you notice?

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Glossary

social epidemiology
: the study of the causes and distribution of diseases

Health in the United States

- Understand how social epidemiology can be applied to health in the United States
- Explain disparities of health based on gender, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity
- Give an overview of mental health and disability issues in the United States
- Explain the terms stigma and medicalization

Health in the United States is a complex issue. Although this country is the champion of the world in terms of the GDP, it evidently lags behind all industrialized countries in terms of providing care to all its citizens and of the quality of its healthcare. The following sections look at several aspects of health in the United States.

Health by Race and Ethnicity

When looking at the social epidemiology of the United States, it is hard to miss the disparities among races. The discrepancy between black and white Americans shows the gap clearly; in 2008, the average **life expectancy** for white males was approximately five years longer than for black males: 75.9 compared to 70.9. An even stronger disparity was found in 2007: the **infant mortality** rate (the number of deaths of babies younger than one year old per 1,000) for blacks was nearly twice that of whites (13.2 to 5.6) (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). According to a report from the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation (2007), African Americans also have higher incidence of several other diseases and causes of mortality, from cancer to heart disease to diabetes. In a similar vein, it is important to note that ethnic minorities, including Mexican Americans and Native Americans, also have higher rates of these diseases and causes of mortality than whites.

Lisa Berkman (2009) notes that this gap started to narrow during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, but it began widening again in the early 1980s. What accounts for these perpetual disparities in health among different ethnic groups? Much of the answer lies in the level of healthcare that these groups receive. The National Healthcare Disparities Report

(2010) shows that even after adjusting for insurance differences, racial and ethnic minority groups receive poorer quality of care and less access to care than dominant groups. As discussed in Ch. 7 (Race and Ethnicity), this results, in part, from **residential segregation** by social class as well as by race. The Report identified these racial inequalities in care:

1. Black Americans, American Indians, and Alaskan Natives received inferior care than Caucasian Americans for about 40% of measures.
2. Asian ethnicities received inferior care for about 20% of measures.
3. Among whites, Hispanic whites received 60% inferior care of measures compared to non-Hispanic whites (Agency for Health Research and Quality 2010). When considering access to care, the figures were comparable.

Another cause for the disparities among races in terms of health in the U.S. is the healthcare costs, ridiculously expensive compared to any other industrialized countries. A new study from academic researchers found, indeed, that 66.5% of all bankruptcies in the U.S. were tied to medical issues (CNBC 2019). An estimated 530,000 families turn to bankruptcy each year because of medical issues and bills, the research found.

The expensive healthcare costs in the U.S. can cause not just bankruptcy but even death. According to the Gallup (2019), indeed, more than 13% of American adults--or about 34 million people--report knowing of at least one friend or family member in the past five years who died after not receiving needed medical treatment because they were unable to pay for it. Nonwhites, those in lower-income households, and those younger than 45 are all more likely to know someone who has died under these circumstances. In all, it is estimated that about 2.8 million persons died this way in 2017.

Health by Socioeconomic Status

Discussions of health by race and ethnicity often overlap with those of health by social class, since the two variables are closely intertwined in the United States. As the Agency for Health Research and Quality (2010) notes, “racial and ethnic minorities are more likely than whites to be poor or near

poor," so race and social class tend to overlap to some extent. It is reported that one of the strongest predictors of morbidity (the incidence of disease) and mortality (death) is social class (Winkleby 1992).

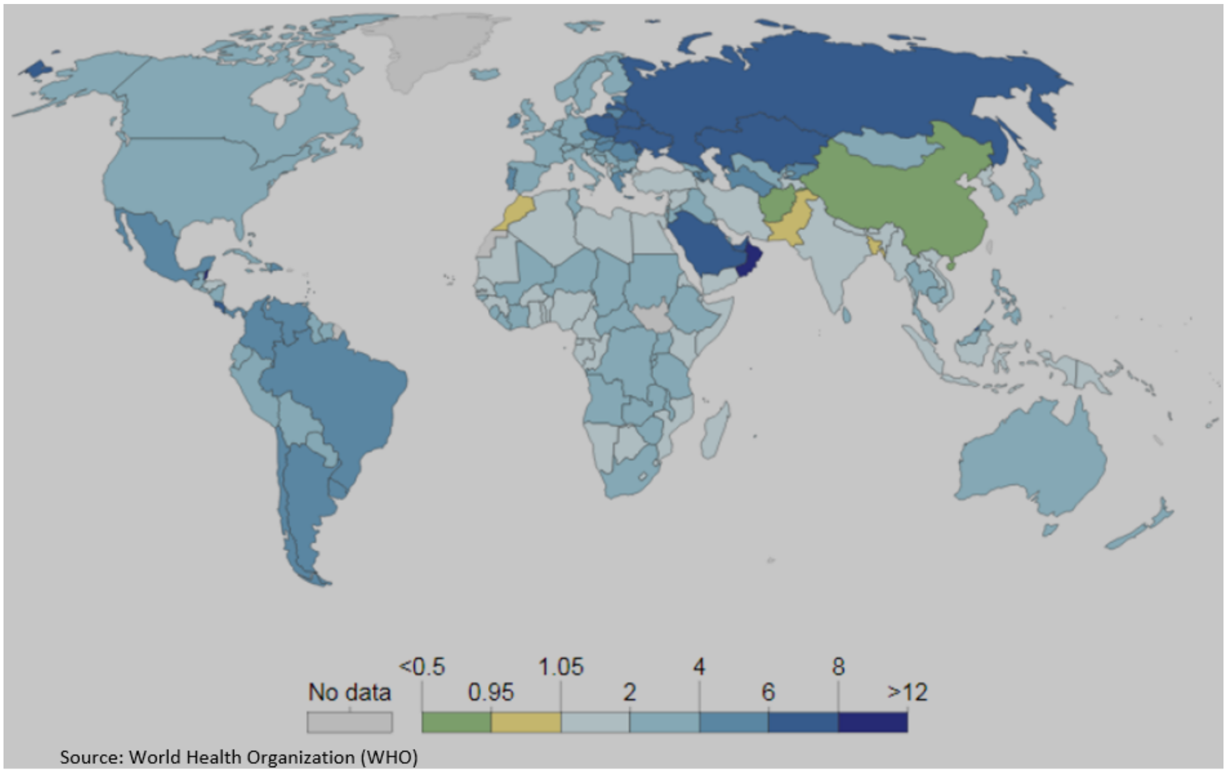
Among the 3 determinants of social class, education plays an important role for health. Phelan and Link (2003) note that initially, social class didn't make a difference in terms of chances to get such behavior-influenced diseases as lung cancer (from smoking), heart disease (from poor eating and exercise habits), and AIDS. However, once information linking habits to disease was disseminated, these diseases decreased among middle-class people but not among lower-class people.

Health by Gender

Women have been neglected in the healthcare industry. As they are more educated than before, many complain such situation. In 2008, one quarter of females questioned the quality of her healthcare (Ranji and Salganico 2011). Further examination of the lack of confidence in the healthcare system by women, as identified in the Kaiser study, found, for example, low-class women were more likely (32% compared to 23%) to express concerns about healthcare quality.

Women are three times more likely than men to be diagnosed with certain kinds of mental disorders, such as instability of identity, of mood, and of behavior. Psychologist Dana Becker decries the pejorative connotation of the diagnosis, saying that it predisposes many people, both within and outside of the profession of psychotherapy, against women who have been so diagnosed. This is a good example of "stigmatization of illness," although, of course, it's a bad phenomenon.

Gender Ratio by Suicide Rates, 2004 (WHO)



On the other hand, research indicates that in almost all countries, except a very few, such as China and Afghanistan, men are more likely than women to commit suicide (e.g., Travis 1990). The figure above (Gender Ratio by Suicide Rates, 2004) shows, for example, that in the United States (the color light blue), while one woman commits suicide, between 2 and 4 men commit suicide. In East Europe (the dark blue), such as Russia, the number of men who commit suicide, while one woman commits suicide, jumps up to between 8 and 12.

How did Durkheim explain suicide? Yes, it's "solidarity" that he used as the factor that can cause the phenomenon. Does it mean that there's a difference between men and women in terms of solidarity, almost worldwide? That is, are men more isolated than women? Are women more cooperative than men? In other words, are men more likely than women to face competitive situations than cooperative ones?

Mental Health and Disability

The treatment received by those defined as mentally ill or disabled varies greatly from country to country. In the post-millennial United States, those of us who have never experienced such a disadvantage take for granted the rights our society guarantees for each citizen. We do not think about the relatively recent nature of the protections, unless, of course, we know someone constantly inconvenienced by the lack of accommodations or misfortune of suddenly experiencing a temporary disability.

Mental Health

People with mental disorders (a condition that makes it more difficult to cope with everyday life) and people with mental illness (a severe, lasting mental disorder that requires long-term treatment) experience a wide range of effects.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the most common mental disorders in the United States are **anxiety disorders**. Almost 18% of U.S. adults are likely to be affected in a single year, and 28% are likely to be affected over the course of a lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health 2005). Anxiety disorders include obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and both social and specific phobias.

The second most common mental disorders in the United States are **mood disorders**; roughly 10% of U.S. adults are likely to be affected yearly, while 21% are likely to be affected over the course of a lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health 2005). Major mood disorders are depression, bipolar disorder, and dysthymic disorder. Like anxiety, depression might seem like something that everyone experiences at some point, and it is true that most people feel sad or “blue” at times in their lives. A true depressive episode, however, is more than just feeling sad for a short period. It is a long-term, debilitating illness that usually needs treatment to cure. And bipolar disorder is characterized by dramatic shifts in energy and mood, often affecting the individual’s ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. Bipolar disorder used to be called manic depression because of the way people would swing between manic and depressive episodes.

Depending on what definition is used, there is some overlap between mood disorders and **personality disorders**, which affect 9% of people in the United States yearly. The American Psychological Association publishes the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual on Mental Disorders* (DSM), and their definition of personality disorders is changing in the fifth edition, which is being revised in 2011 and 2012. After a multilevel review of proposed revisions, the American Psychiatric Association Board of Trustees ultimately decided to retain the DSM-IV categorical approach with the same ten personality disorders (paranoid personality disorder, schizoid personality disorder, schizotypal personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, histrionic personality, narcissistic personality disorder, avoidant personality disorder, dependent personality disorder and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. In the *DSM-IV*, personality disorders represent “an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the culture of the individual who exhibits it” (National Institute of Mental Health). In other words, personality disorders cause people to behave in ways that are seen as abnormal to society but seem normal to them. The *DSM-V* proposes broadening this definition by offering five broad personality trait domains to describe personality disorders, some related to the level or type of their disconnect with society. As their application evolves, we will see how their definitions help scholars across disciplines understand the intersection of health issues and how they are defined by social institutions and cultural norms.

Medication is a common

option for children with ADHD. (Photo courtesy of Deviation56/Wikimedia Commons)

Another fairly commonly diagnosed mental disorder is Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (**ADHD**), which statistics suggest affects 9 percent of children and 8 percent of adults on a lifetime basis (National Institute of Mental Health 2005). ADHD is one of the most common childhood disorders, and it is marked by difficulty paying attention, difficulty controlling behavior, and hyperactivity. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), ADHD responds positively to stimulant drugs like Ritalin, which helps people stay focused. However, there is some social debate over whether such drugs are being overprescribed (American Psychological Association). In fact, some critics question whether this disorder is really as widespread as it seems, or if it is a case of over diagnosis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only 5 percent of children have ADHD. However approximately 11 percent of children ages four through seventeen have been diagnosed with ADHD as of 2011.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) have gained a lot of attention in recent years. The term ASD encompasses a group of developmental brain disorders that are characterized by "deficits in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and engagement in repetitive behaviors or interests" (National Institute of Mental Health). As with the personality disorders described above, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual on Mental Disorders*' description of these is in the process of being revised.

Medicalization in Critical Lens

According to Conrad (2005), by the 1980s, some profound changes in organization of medicine had started. Managed care organizations, the pharmaceutical industry, and some kinds of physicians, such as psychiatrists, increasingly saw patients as consumers or potential markets.

Inventing diseases, marketing them, and then selling drugs and/or treatments for them have become common in the post-Prozac era. ADHD, which didn't exist 50 years ago, is now treated by drugs. Strong sexual desire is now called "hypersexual disorder" and treated by therapists (Reay et al. 2013). For profit motive, medicalization redefines bad behaviors, or even normal behaviors, as sick behaviors.

Disability

The handicapped accessible sign indicates that people with disabilities can access the facility. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that access be provided to everyone. (Photo courtesy of Ltljltlj/Wikimedia Commons)

Disability refers to a reduction in one's ability to perform everyday tasks. The World Health Organization makes a distinction between the various terms used to describe handicaps that's important to the sociological perspective. They use the term **impairment** to describe the physical limitations, while reserving the term disability to refer to the social limitation.

Before the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, people in the United States with disabilities were often excluded from opportunities and social institutions many of us take for granted. This occurred not only through employment and other kinds of discrimination but also through casual acceptance by most people in the United States of a world designed for the convenience of the able-bodied. Imagine being in a wheelchair and trying to use a sidewalk without the benefit of wheelchair-accessible curbs. Imagine as a blind person trying to access information without the widespread availability of Braille. Imagine having limited motor control and being faced with a difficult-to-grasp round door handle. Issues like these are what the ADA tries to address. Ramps on sidewalks, Braille instructions, and more accessible door levers are all accommodations to help people with disabilities.

As discussed in the section on mental health, many mental health disorders can be debilitating and can affect a person's ability to cope with everyday life. This can affect social status, housing, and especially employment. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), people with a disability had a higher rate of unemployment than people without a disability in 2010: 14.8 percent to 9.4 percent. This unemployment rate refers only to people actively looking for a job. In fact, eight out of ten people with a disability are considered "out of the labor force;" that is, they do not have jobs and are not looking for them. The combination of this population and the high unemployment rate leads to an employment-population ratio of 18.6 percent among those with disabilities. The employment-population ratio for people without disabilities was much higher, at 63.5 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011).

Note:
Obesity: The Last Acceptable Prejudice

Obesity is considered the last acceptable social stigma. (Photo courtesy of Kyle May/flickr)

What is your reaction to the picture above? Compassion? Fear? Disgust? Many people will look at this picture and make negative assumptions about the man based on his weight. According to a study from the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, large people are the object of "widespread negative stereotypes that overweight and obese persons are lazy, unmotivated, lacking in self-discipline, less competent, noncompliant, and sloppy" (Puhl and Heuer 2009).

Historically, both in the United States and elsewhere, it was considered acceptable to discriminate against people based on prejudiced opinions. Even after slavery was abolished in 1865, the next 100 years of U.S. history saw institutionalized racism and prejudice against black people. In an example of **stereotype interchangeability**, the same insults that are flung today at the overweight and obese population (lazy, for instance), have been flung at various racial and ethnic groups in earlier history. Of course, no one gives voice to these kinds of views in public now, except when talking about obese people.

Why is it considered acceptable to feel prejudice toward—even to hate—obese people? Puhl and Heuer suggest that these feelings stem from the perception that obesity is preventable through self-control, better diet, and more exercise. Highlighting this contention is the fact that studies have

shown that people’s perceptions of obesity are more positive when they think the obesity was caused by non-controllable factors like biology (a thyroid condition, for instance) or genetics.

Even with some understanding of non-controllable factors that might affect obesity, obese people are still subject to stigmatization. Puhl and Heuer’s study is one of many that document discrimination at work, in the media, and even in the medical profession. Obese people are less likely to get into college than thinner people, and they are less likely to succeed at work.

Stigmatization of obese people comes in many forms, from the seemingly benign to the potentially illegal. In movies and television show, overweight people are often portrayed negatively, or as stock characters who are the butt of jokes. One study found that in children’s movies “obesity was equated with negative traits (evil, unattractive, unfriendly, cruel) in 64 percent of the most popular children's videos. In 72 percent of the videos, characters with thin bodies had desirable traits, such as kindness or happiness” (Hines and Thompson 2007). In movies and television for adults, the negative portrayal is often meant to be funny. “Fat suits”—inflatable suits that make people look obese—are commonly used in a way that perpetuates negative stereotypes. Think about the way you have seen obese people portrayed in movies and on television; now think of any other subordinate group being openly denigrated in such a way. It is difficult to find a parallel example.

Summary

Although people in the United States are generally in good health compared to less developed countries, the United States is still facing challenging issues such as a prevalence of obesity and diabetes. Moreover, people in the United States of historically disadvantaged racial groups, ethnicities, socioeconomic status, and gender experience lower levels of healthcare. Mental health and disability are health issues that are significantly impacted by social norms.

Further Research

Is ADHD a valid diagnosis and disease? Some think it is not. This article discusses this history of the issue: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/ADHD_controversy

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Glossary

anxiety disorders
: feelings of worry and fearfulness that last for months at a time

disability
: a reduction in one’s ability to perform everyday tasks; the World Health Organization notes that this is a social limitation

epidemiology

the study of the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases

impairment
the physical limitations a less-able person faces

medicalization
the process by which aspects of life that were considered bad or deviant are redefined as sickness and needing medical attention to remedy

mood disorders
long-term, debilitating illnesses like depression and bipolar disorder

morbidity
the incidence of disease

mortality
the number of deaths in a given time or place

personality disorders
disorders that cause people to behave in ways that are seen as abnormal to society but seem normal to them

stereotype interchangeability
stereotypes that don’t change and that get recycled for application to a new subordinate group

stigmatization
the act of spoiling someone's identity; they are labeled as different, discriminated against, and sometimes even shunned due to an illness or disability

Comparative Health and Medicine

- Explain the different types of health care available in the United States
- Compare the health care system of the United States with that of other countries

There are broad, structural differences among the healthcare systems of different countries. In core nations, those differences might arise in the administration of healthcare, while the care itself is similar. In peripheral and semi-peripheral countries, a lack of basic healthcare administration can be the defining feature of the system. Most countries rely on some combination of modern and traditional medicine. In core countries with large investments in technology, research, and equipment, the focus is usually on modern medicine, with traditional (also called alternative or complementary) medicine playing a secondary role. In the United States, for instance, the American Medical Association (AMA) resolved to support the incorporation of complementary and alternative medicine in medical education. In developing countries, even quickly modernizing ones like China, traditional medicine (often understood as "complementary" by the western world) may still play a larger role.

U.S. Healthcare

U.S. healthcare coverage can broadly be divided into two main categories: **public healthcare** (government-funded) and **private healthcare** (privately funded).

The former (government-funded healthcare) programs include Medicare and Medicaid. **Medicare** provides health services to people over sixty-five years old as well as people who meet other standards for disability. **Medicaid** provides services to people with very low incomes who meet other eligibility requirements. Other government-funded programs include service agencies focused on Native Americans (the Indian Health Service), Veterans (the Veterans Health Administration), and children (the Children's Health Insurance Program).

A controversial issue in 2011 was a proposed constitutional amendment requiring a balanced federal budget, which would almost certainly require billions of dollars in cuts to these programs. As discussed below, the United States already has a significant problem with lack of healthcare coverage for many individuals; if these budget cuts pass, the already heavily burdened programs are sure to suffer, and so are the people they serve (Kogan 2011).

Following the hearing on the Medicare for All Act of 2019 in the Ways and Means Committee, the supporters including BMCC people demand "quality health care for everyone." June 12, 2019.

One of the major issues hotly debated for the U.S. presidential election 2020 is health care. Democratic candidates, and many BMCC people (see above), support what Senator Bernie Sanders calls Medicare for All--yes for "ALL," not just for people over sixty-five years old or those with disability. According to National Nurses United (NNU 2019), whose members love this idea (see above), argues that "Our health care system is broken. In the United States we pay more for our health care than any other country, and yet millions of people are uninsured or under-insured and can't get the lifesaving care they need. The Medicare for All Act of 2019 — H.R. 1384 in the House and S. 1804 in the Senate — would change all of that. It would expand our current Medicare system to provide high-quality, comprehensive health care to everyone!"

ObamaCare

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), officially called The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) and often called **ObamaCare**, is a US law that changed both the healthcare and health insurance industries in the U.S. Passed in 2010 and taking effect in 2014, ObamaCare required the vast majority of Americans to purchase health insurance coverage--although, thanks to the Trump administration, this mandatory rule and its penalty has been judged in 2018 to be invalid from the 2019 tax return on (which takes place in 2020).

One of the good things (functions) of ObamaCare is that insurance companies cannot dismiss applicants for their health status including pre-exiting conditions. For the first time ever, the feds have the authority to require health insurers to accept all customers and offer them a specific set of health benefits.

Companies that have 50 or more full-time workers are required to pay the coverage for them. Small companies that had a little more than 50 workers seem to have reduced the number to below 50. Among small companies, indeed, 57% covered their employees in 2000, but it turned out to be 44% in 2014 (Manchikanti et al. 2017, p. 117).

Some complain that ObamaCare has made medical care, contrary of its purpose, less affordable because of increase in the cost of health insurance coupled with out-of-pocket expenses, including higher premiums, deductibles, and co-pay (Manchikanti 2017, p. 122). People in other developed countries even have never heard of the word "deductibles"--the amount of money a patient has to pay for expenses before his/her insurance plan starts to cover, and that restarts in each year--the rule that doesn't exist in those countries.

ObamaCare didn't reduce the percentage of the uninsured in the U.S. to 0%. Still 13% were uninsured even before President Trump repealed the mandatory rule. Who were they? Some can't afford coverage, which is too expensive to them, but don't qualify the subsidy. Some decided not to be covered and to, rather, pay the tax penalty, which is cheaper to them; they now appreciate President Trump. Also included in the uninsured are: the

homeless, the bankrupt, religious exemptions, prisoners, some Native Americans, and so on.

In the end of 2018, reacting to President Trump's appeal, a "federal judge in Texas struck down the entire Affordable Care Act on Friday on the grounds that its mandate requiring people to buy health insurance is unconstitutional and the rest of the law cannot stand without it" (The New York Times 2018). As an alternative to Obamacare, President Trump offers Trumpcare, while Senator Bernie Sanders calls for, as aforementioned, **Medicare for All**.

Sanders's idea is known as **socialized medicine**, which all other core nations have realized. Under a socialized medicine system, the government owns and runs the system, and hence, unlike in the U.S. that lacks such system, no one has to go bankrupt or die just because they can't pay the healthcare costs. The government employs the doctors, nurses, and other staff, and it owns and runs the hospitals (Klein 2009), using the tax money collected from the people. The examples of socialized medicine can be seen in all other core nations, such as England, where the National Health System (NHS) gives free healthcare to all its residents.

OECD Health Data: Social Protection

Countries	Gov/Public Insurance	Private Insurance
U.S.A.	31.8	53.1
Luxemberg	97.2	0
Belgium	98.8	0
Turkey	99.5	0
Iceland	99.8	0.2
Austria	99.9	0
France	99.9	0
Netherlands	99.9	0
Spain	99.9	0
Australia	100	0
Canada	100	0
Denmark	100	0
Finland	100	0
Greece	100	0
Hungary	100	0
Ireland	100	0
Italy	100	0
Japan	100	0
Portugal	100	0
Sweden	100	0
Switzerland	100	0
United Kingdom	100	0

Source: OECD. 2013. OECD Health Data: Social Protection."

Healthcare Elsewhere

Clearly, healthcare in the United States has some areas for improvement. But how does it compare to healthcare in other countries? Many people in the United States are fond of saying that this country has the best healthcare in the world, it is untrue when compared to other core nations and even to some peripheral nations. According to the World Health Organization (WHO 2000), as shown below, the U.S. healthcare quality is ranked at 37th in the world.

WHO: World's Healthcare Qualities

1	France	21	Belgium
2	Italy	22	Colombia
3	San Marino	23	Sweden
4	Andorra	24	Cyprus
5	Malta	25	Germany
6	Singapore	26	Saudi Arabia
7	Spain	27	U.A. Emirates
8	Oman	28	Israel
9	Austria	29	Morocco
10	Japan	30	Canada
11	Norway	31	Finland
12	Portugal	32	Australia
13	Monaco	33	Chile
14	Greece	34	Denmark
15	Iceland	35	Dominica
16	Luxembourg	36	Costa Rica
17	Netherlands	37	U.S.A.
18	United Kingdom	38	Slovenia
19	Ireland	39	Cuba
20	Switzerland	40	Brunei

Source: The World Health Organization (WHO) 2000.

Heated discussions about socialization of medicine and managed-care options seem frivolous when compared with the issues of healthcare systems in developing or underdeveloped countries. In many countries, per capita income is so low, and governments are so fractured, that healthcare as we know it is virtually non-existent. Care that people in developed countries take for granted—like hospitals, healthcare workers, immunizations, antibiotics and other medications, and even sanitary water for drinking and washing—are unavailable to much of the population. Organizations like Doctors Without Borders, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization have played an important role in helping these countries get their most basic health needs met.

WHO, which is the health arm of the United Nations, set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 with the aim of reaching these goals by 2015. Some of the goals deal more broadly with the socioeconomic factors that influence health, but MDGs 4, 5, and 6 all relate specifically to large-scale health concerns, the likes of which most people in the United States will never contemplate. MDG 4 is to reduce child mortality, MDG 5 aims to improve maternal health, and MDG 6 strives to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. The goals may not seem particularly dramatic, but the numbers behind them show how serious they are.

For MDG 4, the WHO reports that 2009 infant mortality rates in “children under 5 years old in the WHO African Region (127 per 1000 live births)

and in low-income countries (117 per 1000 live births) [had dropped], but they were still higher than the 1990 global level of 89 per 1000 live births" (World Health Organization 2011). The fact that these deaths could have been avoided through appropriate medicine and clean drinking water shows the importance of healthcare.

Much progress has been made on MDG 5, with maternal deaths decreasing by 34 percent. However, almost all maternal deaths occurred in developing countries, with the African region still experiencing high numbers (World Health Organization 2011).

On MDG 6, the WHO is seeing some decreases in per capita incidence rates of malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases. However, the decreases are often offset by population increases (World Health Organization 2011). Again, the lowest-income countries, especially in the African region, experience the worst problems with disease. An important component of disease prevention and control is **epidemiology**, or the study of the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases. Fear of Ebola contamination, primarily in Western Africa but also to a smaller degree in the United States, became national news in the summer and fall of 2014.

Summary

There are broad, structural differences among the healthcare systems of different countries. In core nations, those differences include publicly funded healthcare, privately funded healthcare, and combinations of both. In peripheral and semi-peripheral countries, a lack of basic healthcare administration can be the defining feature of the system.

Further Research

Project Mosquito Net says that mosquito nets sprayed with insecticide can reduce childhood malaria deaths by half. Read more at

http://openstaxcollege.org/l/project_mosquito_net

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Glossary

individual mandate
: a government rule that requires everyone to have insurance coverage or they will have to pay a penalty

private healthcare
: health insurance that a person buys from a private company; private healthcare can either be employer-sponsored or direct-purchase

public healthcare
: health insurance that is funded or provided by the government

socialized medicine
: when the government owns and runs the entire healthcare system

underinsured
: people who spend at least 10 percent of their income on healthcare costs that are not covered by insurance

universal healthcare
: a system that guarantees healthcare coverage for everyone

Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

- Apply functionalist, conflict theorist, and interactionist perspectives to health issues

Each of the three major theoretical perspectives approaches the topics of health, illness, and medicine differently. You may prefer just one of the theories that follow, or you may find that combining theories and perspectives provides a fuller picture of how we experience health and wellness.

Functionalism

According to the functionalist perspective, health is vital to the stability of the society, and therefore sickness is a sanctioned form of deviance. Talcott Parsons (1951) was the first to discuss this in terms of the **sick role**: patterns of expectations that define appropriate behavior for the sick and for those who take care of them.

According to Parsons, the sick person has a specific role with both rights and responsibilities. To start with, she has not chosen to be sick and should not be treated as responsible for her condition. The sick person also has the right of being exempt from normal social roles; she is not required to fulfill the obligation of a well person and can avoid her normal responsibilities without censure. However, this exemption is temporary and relative to the severity of the illness. The exemption also requires **legitimation** by a physician; that is, a physician must certify that the illness is genuine.

The responsibility of the sick person is twofold: to try to get well and to seek technically competent help from a physician. If the sick person stays ill longer than is appropriate (malingers), she may be stigmatized.

Parsons argues that since the sick are unable to fulfill their normal societal roles, their sickness weakens the society. Therefore, it is sometimes necessary for various forms of social control to bring the behavior of a sick person back in line with normal expectations. In this model of health, doctors serve as gatekeepers, deciding who is healthy and who is sick—a

relationship in which the doctor has all the power. But is it appropriate to allow doctors so much power over deciding who is sick? And what about people who are sick, but are unwilling to leave their positions for any number of reasons (personal/social obligations, financial need, or lack of insurance, for instance).

Conflict Perspective

Theorists using the conflict perspective suggest that issues with the healthcare system, as with most other social problems, are rooted in capitalist society. According to conflict theorists, capitalism and the pursuit of profit lead to the **commodification** of health: the changing of something not generally thought of as a commodity into something that can be bought and sold in a marketplace. In this view, people with money and power—the dominant group—are the ones who make decisions about how the healthcare system will be run. They therefore ensure that they will have healthcare coverage, while simultaneously ensuring that subordinate groups stay subordinate through lack of access. This creates significant healthcare—and health—disparities between the dominant and subordinate groups.

Alongside the health disparities created by class inequalities, there are a number of health disparities created by racism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism. When health is a commodity, the poor are more likely to experience illness caused by poor diet, to live and work in unhealthy environments, and are less likely to challenge the system. In the United States, a disproportionate number of racial minorities also have less economic power, so they bear a great deal of the burden of poor health. It is not only the poor who suffer from the conflict between dominant and subordinate groups. For many years now, homosexual couples have been denied spousal benefits, either in the form of health insurance or in terms of medical responsibility. Further adding to the issue, doctors hold a disproportionate amount of power in the doctor/patient relationship, which provides them with extensive social and economic benefits.

While conflict theorists are accurate in pointing out certain inequalities in the healthcare system, they do not give enough credit to medical advances that would not have been made without an economic structure to support

and reward researchers: a structure dependent on profitability. Additionally, in their criticism of the power differential between doctor and patient, they are perhaps dismissive of the hard-won medical expertise possessed by doctors and not patients, which renders a truly egalitarian relationship more elusive.

Symbolic Interactionism

According to theorists working in this perspective, health and illness are both socially constructed. As we discussed in the beginning of the chapter, interactionists focus on the specific meanings and causes people attribute to illness. The term **medicalization of deviance** refers to the process that changes “bad” behavior into “sick” behavior. A related process is **demedicalization**, in which “sick” behavior is normalized again. Medicalization and demedicalization affect who responds to the patient, how people respond to the patient, and how people view the personal responsibility of the patient (Conrad and Schneider 1992).

In this engraving from the nineteenth century, “King Alcohol” is shown with a skeleton on a

barrel of alcohol. The words “poverty,” “misery,” “crime,” and “death” hang in the air behind him. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons)

An example of medicalization is illustrated by the history of how our society views alcohol and alcoholism. During the nineteenth century, people who drank too much were considered bad, lazy people. They were called drunks, and it was not uncommon for them to be arrested or run out of a town. Drunks were not treated in a sympathetic way because, at that time, it was thought that it was their own fault that they could not stop drinking. During the latter half of the twentieth century, however, people who drank too much were increasingly defined as alcoholics: people with a disease or a genetic predisposition to addiction who were not responsible for their drinking. With alcoholism defined as a disease and not a personal choice, alcoholics came to be viewed with more compassion and understanding. Thus, “badness” was transformed into “sickness.”

There are numerous examples of demedicalization in history as well. During the Civil War era, slaves who frequently ran away from their owners were diagnosed with a mental disorder called *drapetomania*. This has since been reinterpreted as a completely appropriate response to being enslaved. A more recent example is homosexuality, which was labeled a mental disorder or a sexual orientation disturbance by the American Psychological Association until 1973.

While interactionism does acknowledge the subjective nature of diagnosis, it is important to remember who most benefits when a behavior becomes defined as illness. Pharmaceutical companies make billions treating

illnesses such as fatigue, insomnia, and hyperactivity that may not actually be illnesses in need of treatment, but opportunities for companies to make more money.

Summary

While the functionalist perspective looks at how health and illness fit into a fully functioning society, the conflict perspective is concerned with how health and illness fit into the oppositional forces in society. The interactionist perspective is concerned with how social interactions construct ideas of health and illness.

Further Research

Should alcoholism and other addictions be medicalized? Read and watch a dissenting view: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/addiction_medicalization

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Glossary

commodification
: the changing of something not generally thought of as a commodity into something that can be bought and sold in a marketplace

demedicalization
: the social process that normalizes “sick” behavior

legitimation
 the act of a physician certifying that an illness is genuine

medicalization of deviance
 the process that changes “bad” behavior into “sick” behavior

sick role
 the pattern of expectations that define appropriate behavior for the sick and for those who take care of them

Demography and Population

- Understand demographic measurements like fertility and mortality rates
- Describe a variety of demographic theories, such as Malthusian, cornucopian, zero population growth, and demographic transition theories
- Be familiar with current population trends and patterns
- Understand the difference between an internally displaced person, an asylum-seeker, and a refugee

At over 7 billion, Earth's population is always on the move. (Photo courtesy of David Sim/flickr)

Between 2011 and 2012, we reached a population milestone of 7 billion humans on the earth's surface. The rapidity with which this happened demonstrated an exponential increase from the time it took to grow from 5 billion to 6 billion people. In short, the planet is filling up. How quickly will we go from 7 billion to 8 billion? How will that population be distributed? Where is population the highest? Where is it slowing down? Where will people live? To explore these questions, we turn to **demography**, or the study of populations. Three of the most important components that affect the issues above are fertility, mortality, and migration.

The **fertility rate** of a society is a measure noting the number of children born. Demographers measure fertility using the crude birthrate (the number of live births per 1,000 people per year).

Just as fertility measures childbearing, the **mortality rate** is a measure of the number of people who die. The crude death rate is a number derived from the number of deaths per 1,000 people per year.

Another key element in studying populations is the movement of people into and out of an area. In addition to the "fertility rate" and the "mortality rate," demographers use the **net migration rate**, the number of people coming in minus that of people getting out of the country, as a major factor that affects the population fluctuation (or increase/decrease).

Note:

The 2014 Child Migration Crisis

Children have always contributed to the total number of migrants crossing the southern border of the United States illegally, but in 2014, a steady overall increase in unaccompanied minors from Central America reached crisis proportions when tens of thousands of children from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras crossed the Rio Grande and overwhelmed border patrols and local infrastructure (Dart 2014).

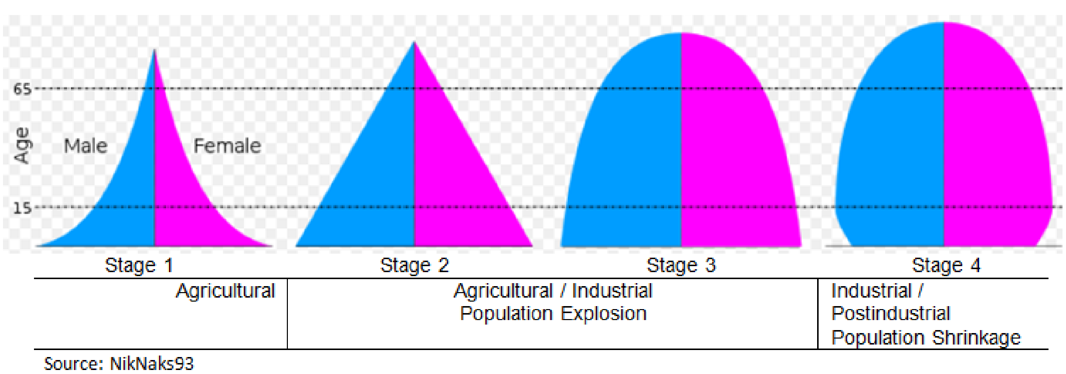
Since legislators passed the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 in the last days of the Bush administration, unaccompanied minors from countries that do not share a border with the United States are guaranteed a hearing with an immigration judge where they may request asylum based on a “credible” fear of persecution or torture (U.S. Congress 2008). In some cases, these children are looking for relatives and can be placed with family while awaiting a hearing on their immigration status; in other cases they are held in processing centers until the Department of Health and Human Services makes other arrangements (Popescu 2014).

The 2014 surge placed such a strain on state resources that Texas began transferring the children to Immigration and Naturalization facilities in California and elsewhere, without incident for the most part. On July 1, 2014, however, buses carrying the migrant children were blocked by

protesters in Murrietta, California, who chanted, "Go home" and "We don’t want you.” (Fox News and Associated Press 2014; Reyes 2014).
Given the fact that these children are fleeing various kinds of violence and extreme poverty, how should the U.S. government respond? Should the government pass laws granting a general amnesty? Or should it follow a zero-tolerance policy, automatically returning any and all unaccompanied minor migrants to their countries of origin so as to discourage additional immigration that will stress the already overwhelmed system?
A functional perspective theorist might focus on the dysfunctions caused by the sudden influx of underage asylum seekers, while a conflict perspective theorist might look at the way social stratification influences how the members of a developed country are treating the lower-status migrants from less-developed countries in Latin America. An interactionist theorist might see significance in the attitude of the Murrietta protesters toward the migrant children. Which theoretical perspective makes the most sense to you?

Population Growth

Changing fertility, mortality, and migration rates make up the total population composition, a snapshot of the demographic profile of a population. This number can be measured for societies, nations, world regions, or other groups. The population composition shapes the **population pyramid**, a picture of population distribution by sex and age ([link]).



The typical shapes of the population pyramids of agricultural, industrial, and postindustrial societies (Source: NikNaks93)

In Stage 1, the number of children is large, but people die young, and the number of the elderly is very small. In Stage 2, death rates decrease, but birth rates remain to be high, and the population begin increasing (**population explosion**). This is a typical problem shared among peripheral nations that have scarce resources.

In Stage 3, death rates remain to be low, but birth rates decline, and the population growth begins slowing down. In Stage 4, although people live way longer than before, as the number of children becomes extremely low, the population can shrink (**population shrinkage**). This is a typical problem among core nations; the "dependency ratio" is too big. The Unites States, a giant core nation, is an exception; immigrants from peripheral nations tend to have a large number of children.

Demographic Theories

Sociologists have long looked at population issues as central to understanding human interactions. Below we will look at four theories about population that inform sociological thought: Malthusian, zero population growth, cornucopian, and demographic transition theories.

Malthusian Theory

Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) was an English clergyman who made dire predictions about earth’s ability to sustain its growing population. According to **Malthusian theory**, there are two different groups of factors that can control human population. One is called "positive checks" and the other, "preventive checks."

The **positive checks** include war, famine, and disease; they control the population by increasing mortality rates (Malthus 1798). The **preventive checks** include contraception and celibacy; they control the population by decreasing fertility rates.

Overall, Malthus viewed that people could produce only limited amount of **food** in a given year, yet the **population** was increasing at an exponential rate. Eventually, he thought, people would run out of food and begin to starve. They would go to war (a positive check) over resources and, as a result, reduce the population to a manageable level, and then the cycle would begin anew.

Of course, this has not exactly happened (see the population pyramid above and anti-Malthusian theory below).

Zero Population Growth

A neo-Malthusian researcher named Paul Ehrlich brought Malthus's predictions into the twentieth century. However, according to Ehrlich, it is the environment, not specifically the food supply, that will play a crucial role in the continued health of planet's population (Ehrlich 1968). Ehrlich's ideas suggest that the human population is moving rapidly toward complete environmental collapse, as privileged people use up or pollute a number of environmental resources such as water and air. He advocated for a goal of **zero population growth** (ZPG), in which the number of people entering a population through birth or immigration is equal to the number of people leaving it via death or emigration. While support for this concept is mixed, it is still considered a possible solution to global overpopulation.

Cornucopian Theory

Of course, some theories are less focused on the pessimistic hypothesis that the world's population will meet a detrimental challenge to sustaining itself. **Cornucopian theory** scoffs at the idea of humans wiping themselves out; it

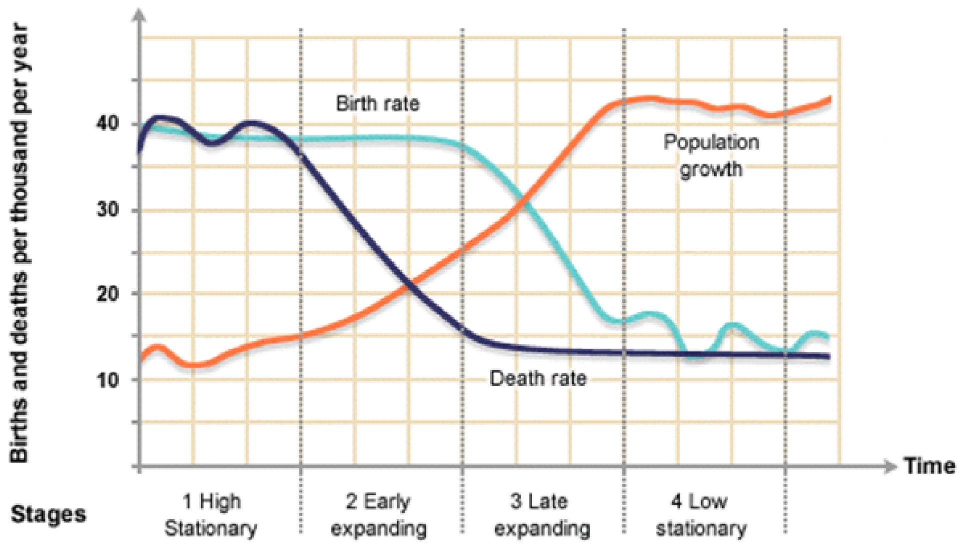
asserts that human ingenuity can resolve any environmental or social issues that develop. As an example, it points to the issue of food supply. If we need more food, the theory contends, agricultural scientists will figure out how to grow it, as they have already been doing for centuries. After all, in this perspective, human ingenuity has been up to the task for thousands of years and there is no reason for that pattern not to continue (Simon 1981).

Demographic Transition (Anti-Malthusian) Theory

Whether you believe that we are headed for environmental disaster and the end of human existence as we know it, or you think people will always adapt to changing circumstances, we can see clear patterns in population growth. Societies develop along a predictable continuum as they evolve from unindustrialized to postindustrial.

Demographic transition theory (Caldwell and Caldwell 2006) suggests that future population growth will develop along a predictable four-stage model. Instead of the food supply, this theory points to the fluctuation of the birth rate and the death rate that depends, to a great extent, on the shifting mode of economy.

Demographic Transition (Anti-Malthusian) Theory



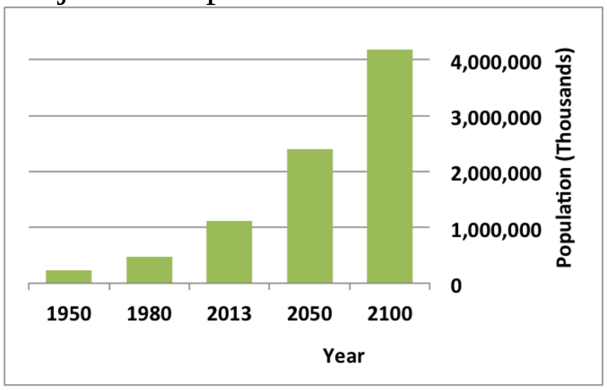
Agricultural	Agricultural / Industrial Population Explosion	Industrial / Postindustrial Population Shrinkage

- Stage 1: In agricultural societies, birth, death, and infant mortality rates are all high, while life expectancy is short.
- Stage 2: When societies are being industrialized, although birth rates remain to be high, infant mortality and death rates drop, and life expectancy increases.
- Stage 3: In highly industrialized societies, both birth and death rates decline, while life expectancy continues to increase, and the population growth eventually stops.
- Stage 4: In postindustrial societies, death rates become even lower, and people live longer, but as birth rates sharply decline, overall population begins shrinking.

The United Nations Population Fund (2008) categorizes nations as high fertility, intermediate fertility, or low fertility. The United Nations (UN) anticipates the population growth will triple between 2011 and 2100 in high-fertility countries, which are currently concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. For countries with intermediate fertility rates (the United States, India, and Mexico all fall into this category), growth is expected to be about 26% (population explosion). And low-fertility countries like Japan, Australia, and most of Europe will actually see population declines of approximately 20% (population shrinkage).

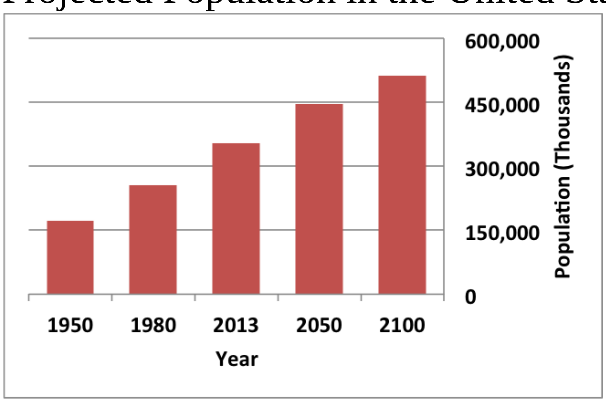
Changes in U.S. Immigration Patterns and Attitudes

Projected Population in Africa



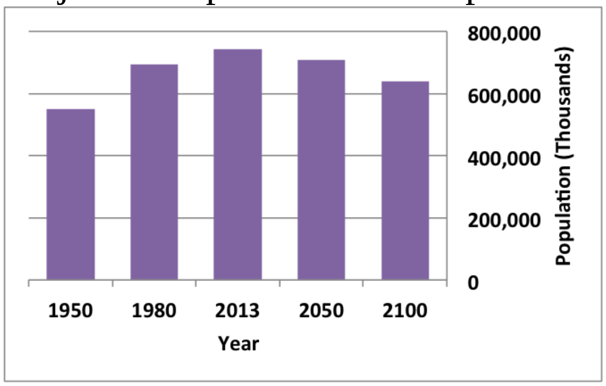
This graph shows the population growth of countries located on the African continent, many of which have high fertility rates. (Graph courtesy of USAID)

Projected Population in the United States



The United States has an intermediate fertility rate, and therefore, a comparatively moderate projected population growth. (Graph courtesy of USAID)

Projected Population in Europe



This chart shows the projected population growth of Europe for the remainder of this century. (Graph courtesy of USAID)

Worldwide patterns of migration have changed, though the United States remains the most popular destination. From 1990 to 2013, the number of migrants living in the United States increased from one in six to one in five (The Pew Research Center 2013). Overall, in 2013 the United States was home to about 46 million foreign-born people, while only about 3 million U.S. citizens lived abroad. Of foreign-born citizens emigrating to the United States, 55 percent originated in Latin America and the Caribbean (Connor, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013).

While there are more foreign-born people residing in the United States legally, as of 2012 about 11.7 million resided here without legal status (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013). Most citizens agree that our national immigration policies are in need major adjustment. Almost three-quarters of those in a recent national survey believed illegal immigrants should have a path to citizenship provided they meet other requirements, such as speaking English or paying restitution for the time they spent in the country illegally. Interestingly, 55 percent of those surveyed who identified as Hispanic think a pathway to citizenship is of secondary importance to

provisions for living legally in the United States without the threat of deportation (The Pew Research Center 2013).

Summary

Scholars understand demography through various analyses. Malthusian, zero population growth, cornucopian theory, and demographic transition theories all help sociologists study demography. The earth's human population is growing quickly, especially in peripheral countries. Factors that impact population include birthrates, mortality rates, and migration, including immigration and emigration. There are numerous potential outcomes of the growing population, and sociological perspectives vary on the potential effect of these increased numbers. The growth will pressure the already taxed planet and its natural resources.

Further Research

To learn more about population concerns, from the new-era ZPG advocates to the United Nations reports, check out these links: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/population_connection and http://openstaxcollege.org/l/un-population

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Glossary

carrying capacity

the amount of people that can live in a given area considering the amount of available resources

cornucopian theory
: a theory that asserts human ingenuity will rise to the challenge of providing adequate resources for a growing population

demographic transition theory
: a theory that describes four stages of population growth, following patterns that connect birth and death rates with stages of industrial development

demography
: the study of population

fertility rate
: a measure noting the actual number of children born

Malthusian theory
: a theory asserting that population is controlled through positive checks (war, famine, disease) and preventive checks (measures to reduce fertility)

mortality rate
: a measure of the number of people in a population who die

population composition
: a snapshot of the demographic profile of a population based on fertility, mortality, and migration rates

population pyramid
: a graphic representation that depicts population distribution according to age and sex

sex ratio
: the ratio of men to women in a given population

zero population growth

a theoretical goal in which the number of people entering a population through birth or immigration is equal to the number of people leaving it via death or emigration

Urbanization

- Describe the process of urbanization in the United States and the growth of urban populations worldwide
- Understand the function of suburbs, exurbs, and concentric zones
- Discuss urbanization from various sociological perspectives

Image: ahundt/public domain

New York City is an iconic image of city life.
(Photo courtesy of flickr)

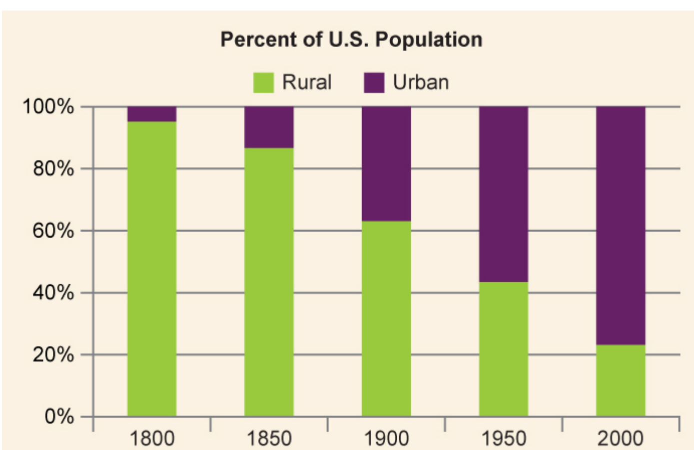
Urbanization is the process through which rural areas are shifting toward urban areas. An urban area will comprise a densely settled core of census tracts and/or census blocks that meet minimum population density requirements (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The Census Bureau identifies two types of urban areas: (1) Urbanized Areas (UAs) of 50,000 or more people and (2) Urban Clusters (UCs) of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people.

Urban sociology studies such process, focusing on various issues related to it. Urban areas, by definition, have dense populations, and people placed closely to each other in such areas are diverse in terms of many aspects, such as values and norms, race/ethnicity, religion, education, occupation, income, political orientation, and so on. This inevitably diverse characteristic of urban areas (related to **organic solidarity** as opposed to

mechanical solidarity [see Chapter 5, Society and Social Interaction]) yields a variety of issues. Racism is one thing, class issue is another, and crime rates often positively linked to such situations may be still another...

The Growth of Cities

According to sociologist Gideon Sjoberg (1965), there are three prerequisites for the development of a city: First, good environment with clean water and a favorable climate; second, advanced technology, which will produce a food surplus to support nonfarmers; and third, strong social organization to ensure social stability and a stable economy. The earliest cities were small by today's standards, and the largest was most likely Rome, with about 650,000 inhabitants (Chandler and Fox 1974). The factors limiting the size of ancient cities included lack of adequate sewage control, limited food supply, and immigration restrictions. Indeed, farmers were tied to the land, and transportation was limited and inefficient. Today, the primary influence on cities' growth is economic forces. Unlike small folk villages, strangers (or immigrants) have chances to get a job in big cities.



As this chart illustrates, the shift from rural to urban living in the United States has been dramatic and

continuous. (Graph courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau)

Urbanization in the United States

Urbanization in the United States proceeded rapidly during the Industrial Era. As more and more opportunities for work appeared in factories, workers left farms (and the rural communities that housed them) to move to the cities. From mill towns in Massachusetts to tenements in New York, the industrial era saw an influx of poor workers into U.S. cities. At various times throughout the country's history, certain demographic groups, from post-Civil War southern Blacks to more recent immigrants, have made their way to urban centers to seek a better life in the city.

Suburbs and Exurbs

As cities grew more crowded, and often more impoverished and costly, more and more people began to migrate back out of them. But instead of returning to rural small towns (like they'd resided in before moving to the city), these people needed close access to the cities for their jobs. In the 1850s, as the urban population greatly expanded and transportation options improved, suburbs developed. **Suburbs** are the communities surrounding cities, typically close enough for a daily commute in, but far enough away to allow for more space than city living affords. The bucolic suburban landscape of the early twentieth century has largely disappeared due to sprawl. Suburban sprawl contributes to traffic congestion, which in turn contributes to commuting time. And commuting times and distances have continued to increase as new suburbs developed farther and farther from city centers. Simultaneously, this dynamic contributed to an exponential increase in natural resource use, like petroleum, which sequentially increased pollution in the form of carbon emissions.

As the suburbs became more crowded and lost their charm, those who could afford it turned to the **exurbs**, communities that exist outside the ring of suburbs and are typically populated by even wealthier families who want

more space and have the resources to lengthen their commute. Together, the suburbs, exurbs, and metropolitan areas all combine to form a **metropolis**. New York was the first U.S. **megalopolis**, a huge urban corridor encompassing multiple cities and their surrounding suburbs. These metropolises use vast quantities of natural resources and are a growing part of the U.S. landscape.

The suburban sprawl in Toronto means long commutes and traffic congestion. (Photo courtesy of Payon Chung/flickr)

Note:

Suburbs Are Not All White Picket Fences: The Banlieues of Paris

What makes a suburb a suburb? Simply, a suburb is a community surrounding a city. But when you picture a suburb in your mind, your image may vary widely depending on which nation you call home. In the United States, most consider the suburbs home to upper— and middle—class people with private homes. In other countries, like France, the suburbs—or “banlieues”— are synonymous with housing projects and

impoverished communities. In fact, the banlieues of Paris are notorious for their ethnic violence and crime, with higher unemployment and more residents living in poverty than in the city center. Further, the banlieues have a much higher immigrant population, which in Paris is mostly Arabic and African immigrants. This contradicts the clichéd U.S. image of a typical white-picket-fence suburb.

In 2005, serious riots broke out in the banlieue of Clichy-sous-Bois after two boys were electrocuted while hiding from the police. They were hiding, it is believed, because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, near the scene of a break-in, and they were afraid the police would not believe in their innocence. Only a few days earlier, interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy (who later became president), had given a speech touting new measures against urban violence and referring to the people of the banlieue as “rabble” (BBC 2005). After the deaths and subsequent riots, Sarkozy reiterated his zero-tolerance policy toward violence and sent in more police. Ultimately, the violence spread across more than thirty towns and cities in France. Thousands of cars were burned, many hundreds of people were arrested, and both police and protesters suffered serious injuries.

Then-President Jacques Chirac responded by pledging more money for housing programs, jobs programs, and education programs to help the banlieues solve the underlying problems that led to such disastrous unrest. But none of the newly launched programs were effective. Sarkozy ran for president on a platform of tough regulations toward young offenders, and in 2007 the country elected him. More riots ensued as a response to his election. In 2010, Sarkozy promised “war without mercy” against the crime in the banlieues (France24 2010). Six years after the Clichy-sous-Bois riot, circumstances are no better for those in the banlieues.

As the Social Policy & Debate feature illustrates, the suburbs also have their share of socio-economic problems. In the United States, **white flight** refers to the migration of economically secure white people from racially mixed urban areas and toward the suburbs. This occurred throughout the twentieth century, due to causes as diverse as the legal end of racial segregation established by *Brown v. Board of Education* to the Mariel

boatlift of Cubans fleeing Cuba’s Mariel port for Miami. Current trends include middle-class African-American families following white flight patterns out of cities, while affluent whites return to cities that have historically had a black majority. The result is that the issues of race, socio-economics, neighborhoods, and communities remain complicated and challenging.

Urbanization around the World

During the Industrial Era, there was a growth spurt worldwide. The development of factories brought people from rural to urban areas, and new technology increased the efficiency of transportation, food production, and food preservation. For example, from the mid-1670s to the early 1900s, London's population increased from 550,000 to 7 million (Old Bailey Proceedings Online 2011). Global favorites like New York, London, and Tokyo are all examples of postindustrial cities. As cities evolve from manufacturing-based industrial to service- and information-based postindustrial societies, gentrification becomes more common. **Gentrification** occurs when members of the middle and upper classes enter and renovate city areas that have been historically less affluent while the poor urban underclass are forced by resulting price pressures to leave those neighborhoods for increasingly decaying portions of the city.

Globally, 54 percent of the world’s 7 billion people currently reside in urban areas, with the most urbanized region being North America (82 percent), followed by Latin America/the Caribbean (80 percent), with Europe coming in third (72 percent). In comparison, Africa is only 40 percent urbanized. With 38 million people, Tokyo is the world’s largest city by population. The world’s most densely populated cities are now largely concentrated in the global south, a marked change from several decades ago when the biggest cities were found in the global north. In the next forty years, the biggest global challenge for urbanized populations, particularly in less developed countries, will be to achieve development that occurs without depleting or damaging the natural environment, also called **sustainable development** (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 2014).

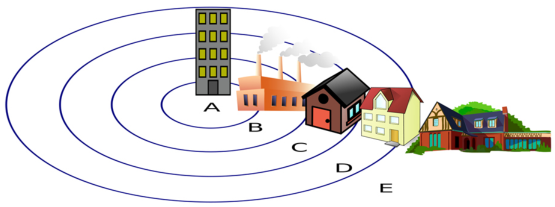
Theoretical Perspectives on Urbanization

The issues of urbanization play significant roles in the study of sociology. Race, economics, and human behavior intersect in cities. Let's look at urbanization through the sociological perspectives of functionalism and conflict theory. Functional perspectives on urbanization generally focus on the ecology of the city, while conflict perspective tends to focus on political economy.

Human ecology is a functionalist field of study that looks at on the relationship between people and their built and natural physical environments (Park 1915). Generally speaking, urban land use and urban population distribution occur in a predictable pattern once we understand how people relate to their living environment. For example, in the United States, we have a transportation system geared to accommodate individuals and families in the form of interstate highways built for cars. In contrast, most parts of Europe emphasize public transportation such as high-speed rail and commuter lines, as well as walking and bicycling. The challenge for a human ecologist working in U.S. urban planning is to design landscapes and waterscapes with natural beauty, while also figuring out how to provide for free-flowing transport of innumerable vehicles, not to mention parking!

The **concentric zone model** (Burgess 1925) is perhaps the most famous example of human ecology. This model views a city as a series of concentric circular areas, expanding outward from the center of the city, with various "zones" invading adjacent zones (as new categories of people and businesses overrun the edges of nearby zones) and succeeding (then after invasion, the new inhabitants repurpose the areas they have invaded and push out the previous inhabitants). In this model, Zone A, in the heart of the city, is the center of the business and cultural district. Zone B, the concentric circle surrounding the city center, is composed of formerly wealthy homes split into cheap apartments for new immigrant populations; this zone also houses small manufacturers, pawn shops, and other marginal businesses. Zone C consists of the homes of the working class and established ethnic enclaves. Zone D holds wealthy homes, white-collar

workers, and shopping centers. Zone E contains the estates of the upper class (in the exurbs) and the suburbs.



This illustration depicts the zones that make up a city in the concentric zone model. (Photo courtesy of Zeimusu/Wikimedia Commons)

In contrast to the functionalist approach, theoretical models in the conflict perspective focus on the way urban areas change according to specific decisions made by political and economic leaders. These decisions generally benefit the middle and upper classes while exploiting the working and lower classes.

For example, sociologists Feagin and Parker (1990) suggested three factors by which political and economic leaders control urban growth. First, these leaders work alongside each other to influence urban growth and decline, determining where money flows and how land use is regulated. Second, exchange value and use value of land are balanced to favor the middle and upper classes so that, for example, public land in poor neighborhoods may be rezoned for use as industrial land. Finally, urban development is dependent on both structure (groups such as local government) and agency (individuals including businessmen and activists), and these groups engage in a push-pull dynamic that determines where and how land is actually used. For example, Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) movements are more likely to emerge in middle and upper-class neighborhoods as engaged

citizens protest poor environmental practices they fear will affect them, so these groups have more control over the use of local land.

Summary

Cities provide numerous opportunities for their residents and offer significant benefits including access to goods to numerous job opportunities. At the same time, high population areas can lead to tensions between demographic groups, as well as environmental strain. While the population of urban dwellers is continuing to rise, sources of social strain are rising along with it. The ultimate challenge for today’s urbanites is finding an equitable way to share the city’s resources while reducing the pollution and energy use that negatively impacts the environment.

Further Research

Interested in learning more about the latest research in the field of human ecology? Visit the Society for Human Ecology web site to discover what’s emerging in this field: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/human_ecology

Getting from place to place in urban areas might be more complicated than you think. Read the latest on pedestrian-traffic concerns at the Urban Blog web site: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/pedestrian_traffic

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Glossary

asylum-seekers
: those whose claim to refugee status have not been validated

concentric zone model
: a model of human ecology that views cities as a series of circular rings or zones

exurbs
: communities that arise farther out than the suburbs and are typically populated by residents of high socioeconomic status

gentrification
: the entry of upper- and middle-class residents to city areas or communities that have been historically less affluent

human ecology
: a functional perspective that looks at the relationship between people and their built and natural environment

internally displaced person
: someone who fled his or her home while remaining inside the country’s borders

megalopolis
: a large urban corridor that encompasses several cities and their surrounding suburbs and exurbs

metropolis
: the area that includes a city and its suburbs and exurbs

refugee
: an individual who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster

suburbs
: the communities surrounding cities, typically close enough for a daily commute

sustainable development
: development that occurs without depleting or damaging the natural environment

urban sociology
: the subfield of sociology that focuses on the study of urbanization

urbanization
: the study of the social, political, and economic relationships of cities

white flight
: the migration of economically secure white people from racially mixed urban areas toward the suburbs

The Environment and Society

- Describe climate change and its importance
- Apply the concept of carrying capacity to environmental concerns
- Understand the challenges presented by pollution, garbage, e-waste, and toxic hazards
- Discuss real-world instances of environmental racism

The **environmental sociology** studies the way humans interact with their environments. This field is closely related to human ecology, which focuses on the relationship between people and their built and natural environments. This is an area that is garnering more attention as extreme weather patterns and policy battles over climate change dominate the news. A key factor of environmental sociology is the concept of carrying capacity, which describes the maximum amount of life that can be sustained within a given area. While this concept can refer to grazing lands or to rivers, we can also apply it to the earth as a whole.

Too little land for grazing means starving cattle. (Photo courtesy of newbeatphoto/flickr)

Note:
The Tragedy of the Commons

You might have heard the expression “the tragedy of the commons.” In 1968, an article of the same title written by Garrett Hardin described how a common pasture was ruined by overgrazing. But Hardin was not the first to notice the phenomenon. Back in the 1800s, Oxford economist William Forster Lloyd looked at the devastated public grazing commons and the unhealthy cattle subject to such limited resources, and saw, in essence, that the carrying capacity of the commons had been exceeded. However, since no one was held responsible for the land (as it was open to all), no one was willing to make sacrifices to improve it. Cattle grazers benefitted from adding more cattle to their herds, but they did not have to take on the responsibility of the lands that were being damaged by overgrazing. So there was an incentive for them to add more head of cattle, and no incentive for restraint.

Satellite photos of Africa taken in the 1970s showed this practice to dramatic effect. The images depicted a dark irregular area of more than 300 square miles. There was a large fenced area, where plenty of grass was growing. Outside the fence, the ground was bare and devastated. The reason was simple: the fenced land was privately owned by informed farmers who carefully rotated their grazing animals and allowed the fields to lie fallow periodically. Outside the fence was land used by nomads. Like the herdsmen in 1800s Oxford, the nomads increased their heads of cattle without planning for its impact on the greater good. The soil eroded, the plants died, then the cattle died, and, ultimately, some of the people died.

How does this lesson affect those of us who don’t need to graze our cattle? Well, like the cows, we all need food, water, and clean air to survive. With the increasing world population and the ever-larger megalopolises with tens of millions of people, the limit of the earth’s carrying capacity is called into question. When too many take while giving too little thought to the rest of the population, whether cattle or humans, the result is usually tragedy.

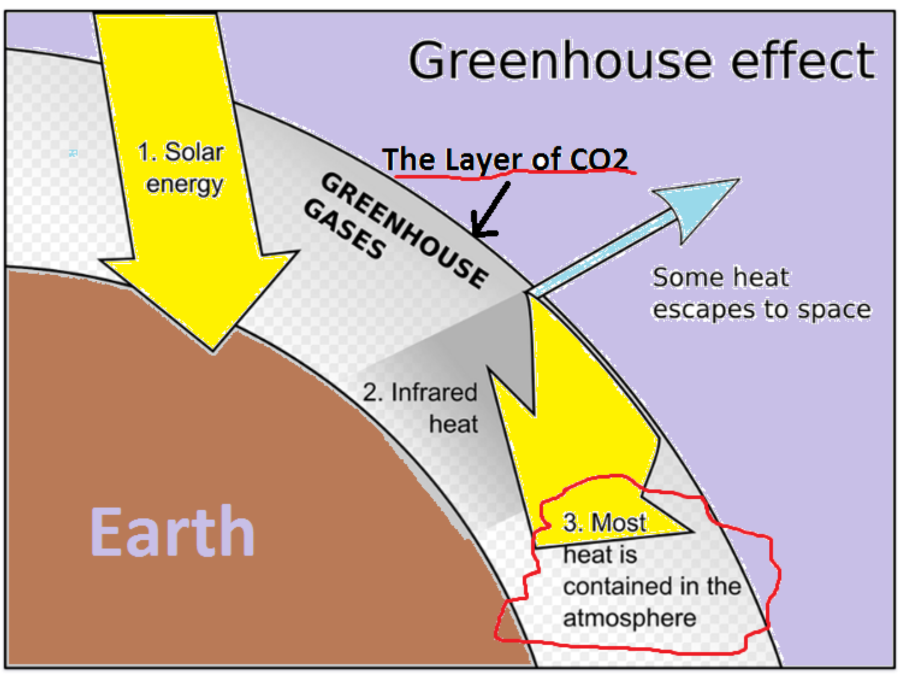
Climate Change

While you might be more familiar with the phrase “global warming,” **climate change** is the term now used to refer to long-term shifts in

temperatures due to human activity and, in particular, the release of greenhouse gases (CO2) into the environment. The planet as a whole is warming, but the term climate change acknowledges that the short-term variations in this process can include both higher and lower temperatures, despite the overarching trend toward warmth.

There are many problems resulting from climate change, such as melting glaciers that raise the sea level, changing ecosystems that exterminate various species, increased precipitation (rain) and hurricanes that devastate our living environments, and so forth. For example, in August, 2018, Hurricane Harvey dumped a record-shattering 60 inches (or 152.4 cm) of rain over some parts of Texas (Vox.com 2018). Over the course of the storm, it's estimated 24 trillion to 34 trillion gallons of water fell in the area. And the weight of that water was so heavy, it actually depressed the earth more than half an inch in some spots, according to the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

The Mechanism of Greenhouse Effect



Source: Pixabay

Climate change is a deeply controversial subject, despite decades of scientific research and a high degree of scientific consensus that supports its existence. For example, according to NASA scientists, 2013 tied with 2009

and 2006 as the seventh-warmest year since 1880, continuing the overall trend of increasing worldwide temperatures (NASA 2014). One effect of climate change is, as mentioned above, more extreme weather. There are increasingly more record-breaking weather phenomena, from the number of Category 4 hurricanes to the amount of snowfall in a given winter. These extremes, while they make for dramatic television coverage, can cause immeasurable damage to crops, property, and even lives.

So why is there a controversy? The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) recognizes the existence of climate change. So do nearly 200 countries that signed the **Kyoto Protocol** in 1992, a document intended to engage countries in voluntary actions to limit the activity that leads to climate change. (The United States was not one of the 200 nations committed to this initiative to reduce environmental damage, and its refusal to sign continues to be a source of contention.)

In 2015, however, the United States joined the **Paris Agreement**, an international agreement aimed at reducing carbon emissions. The U.S., which took the lead in negotiating the deal, signed onto the agreement in April 2016, along with China, the European Union and 171 other nations. China and the U.S. account for nearly 40% of global carbon emissions (CBS News 2017).

But then again, President Trump announced the U.S. will withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Trump repeatedly called climate change a "hoax" during the presidential campaign. As president, he has taken significant steps to roll back Mr. Obama's climate change agenda, saying the Paris Agreement harms U.S. businesses and workers "to the exclusive benefit of other countries."

World systems analysis suggests that while core nations (like the U.S., Western Europe, and Japan) were, historically, the greatest source of greenhouse gases (CO2), they have now evolved into postindustrial societies. Industrialized semi-peripheral and peripheral nations are releasing increasing quantities of carbon emissions. The core nations, now post-industrial and less dependent on greenhouse-gas-causing industries, wish to enact strict protocols regarding the causes of global warming, but the semi-peripheral and peripheral nations rightly point out that they only want the

same economic chance to evolve their economies. Since they were unduly affected by the progress of core nations, if the core nations now insist on "green" policies, they should pay offsets or subsidies of some kind. There are no easy answers to this conflict. It may well not be "fair" that the core nations benefited from ignorance during their industrial boom.

The international community continues to work toward a way to manage climate change. During the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagean, the United States agreed to fund global climate change programs. In September 2010, President Obama announced the Global Climate Change Initiative (GCCI) as part of his administration’s Global Development Policy. The GCCI is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding program intended to improve the economic and environmental sustainability of peripheral and semi-peripheral countries by encouraging the use of alternative, low-carbon, energy sources with financial incentives. Programming is organized around three pillars: (1) climate change adaptation, (2) clean energy, and (3) sustainable landscapes (Troilo 2012).

Pollution

Pollution describes what happens when contaminants are introduced into an environment (water, air, land) at levels that are damaging. Environments can often sustain a limited amount of contaminants without marked change, and water, air, and soil can “heal” themselves to a certain degree. However, once contaminant levels reach a certain point, the results can be catastrophic.

Water

Look at your watch. Wait thirty seconds. In that time, two children have died from lack of access to clean drinking water. Access to safe water is one of the most basic human needs, but nonetheless it is woefully out of reach for millions of people on the planet. Many of the major diseases that peripheral nations battle, such as diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid, are caused

by contaminated water. The situation is only getting more dire as the global population increases. Water is a key resource battleground in the twenty-first century.

Although 70% of earth is made of water, giant corporations mostly use this natural resource for their own profits rather than for sustenance of life. For example, it takes 2.5 liters of water to produce 1 liter of Coca-Cola; for every 1 liter of Coke, 1.5 liters of water are lost. The company and its bottlers use about 300 billion liters of water a year, often in locations that are short of usable water (Blanchard 2007).

As a consequence of population concentrations, water close to human settlements is frequently polluted with untreated or partially treated human waste (sewage), chemicals, radioactivity, and levels of heat sufficient to create large “dead zones” incapable of supporting aquatic life. The methods of food production used by many core nations rely on liberal doses of nitrogen and pesticides, which end up back in the water supply. In some cases, water pollution affects the quality of the aquatic life consumed by water and land animals. Since humans consume at all levels of the food chain, we consume the carcinogen (sustenance that can cause cancer).

Air

China’s fast-growing economy and burgeoning industry have translated into notoriously poor air quality. Smog hangs heavily over the major cities, sometimes grounding aircraft that cannot navigate through it. Pedestrians and cyclists wear air-filter masks to protect themselves. In Beijing, citizens are skeptical that the government-issued daily pollution ratings are trustworthy. Increasingly, they are taking their own pollution measurements in the hopes that accurate information will galvanize others to action. Given that some days they can barely see down the street, they hope action comes soon (Papenfuss 2011).

Humanity, with its growing numbers, use of fossil fuels (oil), and increasingly urbanized society, is putting too much stress on the earth’s atmosphere. The amount of air pollution varies from locale to locale, and

you may be more personally affected than you realize. How often do you check air quality reports before leaving your house? Depending on where you live, this question can sound utterly strange or like an everyday matter. Along with oxygen, most of the time we are also breathing in soot, hydrocarbons, carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur oxides.

Much of the pollution in the air comes from human activity. How many college students move their cars across campus at least once a day? Who checks the environmental report card on how many pollutants each company throws into the air before purchasing a cell phone? Many of us are guilty of taking our environment for granted without concern for how everyday decisions add up to a long-term global problem. How many minor adjustments can you think of, like walking instead of driving, that would reduce your overall carbon footprint?

Remember the "tragedy of the commons." Each of us is affected by air pollution. But like the herder who adds one more head of cattle to realize the benefits of owning more cows but who does not have to pay the price of the overgrazed land, we take the benefit of driving or buying the latest cell phones without worrying about the end result. Air pollution accumulates in the body, much like the effects of smoking cigarettes accumulate over time, leading to more chronic illnesses. And in addition to directly affecting human health, air pollution affects crop quality as well as heating and cooling costs. In other words, we all pay a lot more than the price at the pump when we fill up our tank with gas.

Land

You might have read *The Grapes of Wrath* in English class at some point in time. Steinbeck's tale of the Joads, driven out of their home by the Dust Bowl, is still playing out today. In China, as in Depression-era Oklahoma, over-tilling soil in an attempt to expand agriculture has resulted in the disappearance of large patches of topsoil.

Soil erosion and desertification are just two of the many forms of soil pollution. In addition, all the chemicals and pollutants that harm our water

supplies can also leach into soil with similar effects. Brown zones where nothing can grow are common results of soil pollution. One demand the population boom makes on the planet is a requirement for more food to be produced.

The so-called “Green Revolution” in the 1960s started owing to chemists and world aid organizations working together to bring modern farming methods to peripheral countries. The revolution was based on chemical fertilizer, pesticides, and so on. This successfully helped increase agricultural production worldwide. But as time has gone on, these areas have fallen into even more difficult contamination, which was exported worldwide.

Dredging certain beaches in an attempt to save valuable beachfront property from coastal erosion has resulted in greater storm impact on shorelines, and damage to beach ecosystems (Turneffe Atoll Trust 2008). These dredging projects have damaged reefs, sea grass beds, and shorelines and can kill off large swaths of marine life. Ultimately, this damage threatens local fisheries, tourism, and other parts of the local economy.

Garbage

Where should garbage go when you’ve run out of room? This is a question that is increasingly

pressing the planet. (Photo courtesy of Kevin Krejci/flickr)

Garbage creation and control are major issues faced worldwide. We buy things, use them, and/or throw them away. There are two primary means of waste disposal: landfill (to bury it) and incineration (to burn it). But neither is a good choice for some types of garbage, such as Styrofoam and plastics.

Roughly one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year--approximately 1.3 billion tonnes--gets lost or wasted (fao.org 2019). On the other hand, it is estimated that 36 million people died from starvation in 2017 (The Borgen Project 2017). That is, one person dies of hunger every second. Of these 36 million people, children are especially vulnerable. Every minute, 12 children under the age of five die of hunger.

E-Waste

Electronic waste, or e-waste, is one of the fastest growing and the most dangerous segments of garbage. **E-waste** is the name for obsolete, broken, and worn-out electronics—from computers to mobile phones to televisions. The challenge is that these products, which are multiplying at alarming rates thanks in part to **planned obsolescence** (see Ch. 10, Media and Technology), have toxic chemicals and precious metals in them, a dangerous combination.

So where do they go? Many companies ship their e-waste to peripheral nations in Africa and Asia to be “recycled.” While they are recycled, the result is not exactly clean. In fact, it is dangerous. Overseas, nonetheless, without the environmental regulation, e-waste dumps become a kind of boom town for entrepreneurs. In their hunt, their workers are exposed to deadly toxins.

Governments are beginning to take notice of the impending disaster, and the European Union, as well as the state of California, put stricter regulations in place. These regulations both limit the amount of toxins allowed in electronics and address the issue of end-of-life recycling. But not surprisingly, corporations, while insisting they are greening their process, often fight stricter regulations. Meanwhile, many environmental groups, including the activist group Greenpeace, have taken up the cause. Greenpeace states that it is working to get companies to:

1. measure and reduce emissions with energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy policy advocacy
2. make greener, efficient, longer lasting products that are free of hazardous substance
3. reduce environmental impacts throughout company operations, from choosing production materials and energy sources right through to establishing global take-back programs for old products (Greenpeace 2011).

Greenpeace produces annual ratings of how well companies are meeting these goals so consumers can see how brands stack up. For instance, Apple moved from ranking fourth overall to sixth overall from 2011 to 2012. The hope is that consumers will vote with their wallets, and the greener companies will be rewarded.

Toxic and Radioactive Waste

Radioactivity is a form of fatal air pollution. Nuclear power plants are looked upon as a danger to the environment and to all kinds of living things including, of course, people. They accumulate nuclear waste, which they must then keep track of long term and ultimately figure out how to store the toxic waste material without damaging the environment or putting future generations at risk. Certain radioactive elements (such as plutonium-239) will remain hazardous to humans and other creatures for hundreds of thousands of years.

What's been termed as "The Great East Japan Earthquake" hit on March 11, 2011 (CBC News 2016). The 9.0-magnitude earthquake struck off the northeastern coast of Japan's main island, and triggered a powerful tsunami. The tsunami brought 15-metre (or 49-feet) waves (about a 5-story building high) to Japan's east coast, destroying, among others, three reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant and releasing radioactive material into the air (see below).

The Fukushima nuclear power plants damaged by the monstrous tsunami in 2011, leaking radioactivity into the air, the water, and the land. (Photo courtesy of Digital Globe)

The earthquake and tsunami together caused almost 16,000 deaths, as well as 6,000 people injured and 2,500 still missing. For leaking radioactivity, more than 470,000 people were ordered to leave their homes. Seven years after, many of them are still barred from returning to their homes inside the "exclusion zone," while others opted to resettle elsewhere.

In the immediate aftermath of the nuclear power plants accidents, Japan idled all 54 of its nuclear plants. Now, though, five of them are back online while many more may be on the way (Forbes 2017). Prime Minister Shinzo

Abe, who is pro-business, has said that nuclear power plants are safe. The Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco) is expected to get approval from the government to restart the plants.

What is the public reaction to this? It is negative, angrily. According to a survey taken in 2016, indeed, 57% of the public opposed restarting existing nuclear power plants even if they satisfied new regulatory standards, and 73% demanded a phaseout of nuclear power, with 14% urging an immediate shutdown of all nuclear plants (The Conversation 2017). However, we need to know that attitudes (opinions) and behaviors (voting patterns) are not the same. During elections, after all, many of them choose the safer way, that is, the party in power. Alas...

Oil on the gulf shore beaches caused great destruction, killing marine and land animals and crippling local business. (Photo courtesy of AV8ter/flickr)

Note:

The Fire Burns On: Centralia, Pennsylvania

There used to be a place called Centralia, Pennsylvania. The town incorporated in the 1860s and once had several thousand residents, largely coal workers. But the story of its demise begins a century later in 1962. That year, a trash-burning fire was lit in the pit of the old abandoned coal mine outside of town. The fire moved down the mineshaft and ignited a vein of coal. It is still burning.

For more than twenty years, people tried to extinguish the underground fire, but no matter what they did, it returned. There was little government action, and people had to abandon their homes as toxic gases engulfed the area and sinkholes developed. The situation drew national attention when the ground collapsed under twelve-year-old Todd Domboski in 1981. Todd was in his yard when a sinkhole four feet wide and 150 feet deep opened beneath him. He clung to exposed tree roots and saved his life; if he had fallen a few feet farther, the heat or carbon monoxide would have killed him instantly.

In 1983, engineers studying the fire concluded that it could burn for another century or more and could spread over nearly 4,000 acres. At this point, the government offered to buy out the town's residents and wanted them to relocate to nearby towns. A few determined Centralians refused to leave, even though the government bought their homes, and they are the only ones who remain. In one field, signs warn people to enter at their own risk, because the ground is hot and unstable. And the fire burns on (DeKok 1986).

Environmental Racism

Environmental racism refers to the way in which minority neighborhoods are burdened with a disproportionate volume of hazards, including toxic waste facilities, garbage dumps, and other sources of environmental pollution. All around the world, minority groups bear a greater burden of the health problems through higher exposure to waste and pollution. This can occur in workplaces where regulations are loose, such as sweatshops.

Research indicates, for example, that it pervades all aspects of African Americans' lives: environmentally unsound housing, schools with asbestos problems, facilities and playgrounds with lead paint. (Asbestos is a material used for building construction as it absorbs sound, insulates heat, and so on. But as scientists found it can cause cancer, many countries decided to restrict its usage by the 1980s. The the World Trade Center buildings were built in 1973 and they contain Asbestos.)

A twenty-year comparative sociological study reported “race to be more important than socioeconomic status in predicting the location of the nation’s commercial hazardous waste facilities” (Bullard et al. 2007). This research found, among others, that African American children are five times more likely to have lead poisoning than their Caucasian counterparts, and that a disproportionate number of people of color reside in areas with hazardous waste facilities. Sociologists also examine if environmental racism is observed in the government reactions to natural disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, heatwaves, and so on.

In September, 2017, Hurricane Maria heavily destroyed Puerto Rico, most notably the infrastructure, such as electricity, clean water, and so on. As the blackout dragged on and health care remained strained for months (!), it is estimated that near 3,000 people died in this situation--while the government refused to acknowledge this extraordinary toll (Vox.com 2018).

Dakota Access Pipeline

Photo courtesy of Nightly News: NBCNEWS.

The pipeline is to be built by Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners and is designed to transport as many as 570,000 barrels of crude oil daily from North Dakota to Illinois (Time 2016). The nearly $4 billion project called the **Dakota Access Pipeline** was first proposed in 2014 with an anticipated completion in 2016. The Standing Rock Sioux, a tribe of around 10,000 Native Americans, is protesting the project whose pipe would travel underneath not only the Missouri River, the primary drinking water source for them, but also their sacred burial ground.

As a reaction to the protest, North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple has called in the National Guard (Time 2016). More than 140 people were arrested so far. The Obama administration temporarily blocked construction on the project, but a federal court intervened to allow the project to proceed. President Obama has taken no additional steps and has said nothing officially about the pipeline. Backed by the Nebraska regulators' decision to approve the pipeline, President Trump has happily handed the company a federal permit for its project, which according to him will lower fuel prices, boost national security, and bring jobs (Fortune 2017).

Contrary to the regulators' decision, however, the Dakota Access pipeline leaked, at least five times in 2017 (The Intercept 2018). According to federal regulators, though, no wildlife or no water was impacted. Most of of

the system leaks were considered minor by state and federal monitors. But the fact is that the pipelines leak. Isn't this similar to the Japanese government's attitude toward its nuclear power plants, which got damaged and leaked radioactivity but are nonetheless approved to run again?

Why does environmental racism exist? The reason is simple. Those with resources can raise money and public attention to ensure that their projects are not just safe but also important. This leads to an inequitable distribution of environmental burdens. Another method of keeping this inequity alive is NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) protests by relatively wealthy people. Chemical plants, airports, landfills, and other corporate projects are often blocked by NIMBY protests. Hence, unfavorable projects are moved closer to those who have fewer power.

Summary

The area of environmental sociology is growing as extreme weather patterns and concerns over climate change increase. Human activity leads to pollution of soil, water, and air, compromising the health of the entire food chain. While everyone is at risk, poor and disadvantaged neighborhoods and nations bear a greater burden of the planet’s pollution, a dynamic known as environmental racism.

Further Research

The Borgen Project. 2017. "How Many People Die from Hunger Each Year."

fao.org. 2019. "Key facts on food loss and waste you should know!"

Visit the Cleanups in My Community web site: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/community_cleanup to see where environmental hazards have been identified in your backyard, and what is being done about them.

What is your carbon footprint? Find out using the carbon footprint calculator at http://openstaxcollege.org/l/carbon_footprint_calculator

Find out more about greening the electronics process by looking at Greenpeace’s guide: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/greenpeace_electronics

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Glossary

climate change

long-term shifts in temperature and climate due to human activity

environmental racism
the burdening of economically and socially disadvantaged communities with a disproportionate share of environmental hazards

environmental sociology
the sociological subfield that addresses the relationship between humans and the environment

e-waste
the disposal of broken, obsolete, and worn-out electronics

NIMBY
"Not In My Back Yard," the tendency of people to protest poor environmental practices when those practices will affect them directly

pollution
the introduction of contaminants into an environment at levels that are damaging